

Social work skills for students prior to fieldwork placement

By

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Abstract

Social work skill is a key component of social work education yet it is an under-researched area. This thesis seeks to address the gap in research around preparing social work students with skills they need for fieldwork placement. To do this eight field educators were interviewed to ascertain the skills students need prior to placement. The findings identified ten core skills useful for social work students. The study concludes by suggesting that a robust social work education requires continuing conversations about bicultural education and cross-cultural skills. It also suggests that field educators would benefit from further training on ethical decision-making with newer technologies.

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Chapter 1 Setting the scene

Introduction

This study aims to explore the skills social work students' need prior to their first fieldwork placement. In this thesis skill is defined as "an action with a specific goal that can be learnt" (Trevithick, 2012, p. 44). My interest in this area started four years ago when I moved from social work practice to the position of fieldwork coordinator at the University of Otago's social work programme. The role of fieldwork coordinator is to arrange and assess student fieldwork placements. Fieldwork placement is the work experience component of the social work qualification. One of my tasks in this role is to teach social work skills to students prior to their first placement. When I began in the fieldwork coordinator role, the skills that were taught prior to placement were; communication, critical thinking, assessment, application of theory to practice, bicultural practice, cross-cultural practice and the social work process.

Moving from practice to teaching was a steep learning curve and I had much to learn. Student placements gave me the opportunity to discuss questions around social work education with field educators. Field educators are designated people within a placement agency who provide support to students during their fieldwork placements. Field educators often made the observation that some students were underprepared with skills prior to placement. Field educators indicated that the University of Otago's social work programme needed to pay closer attention to the skills that were being taught prior to placement. There is evidence that this is an opinion of other social workers and that they feel that social work programmes are out of touch with current practice (Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2014).

In response to field educator feedback, the fieldwork team within the social work programme decided to explore the topic of social work skills. Our aim was to obtain the views of field educators and students involved with the social work programme about the skills they thought were needed for a successful placement. At the end of 2015 the fieldwork team conducted focus group discussions and a

questionnaire survey with students and field educators. A literature review exercise on social work skills was also carried out. The combined result of focus groups, survey and literature review offered valuable information that influenced the content of the practice skills paper taught in 2016.

It was at this point that I became aware of the lack of student learning material on the development of social work skills particularly in the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Other researchers have also noticed the lack of research in the area of preparing students with the skills they need prior to fieldwork placement (Hay & Brown, 2015; Hay, Dale, & Yeung, 2016). It is a necessity to prepare students for fieldwork placement (O'Connor, Cecil, & Boudioni, 2009). Learning skills pre-placement increases student performance during fieldwork placement (Kamali, Clary, & Frye, 2017; Tompsett, Henderson, Mathew Byrne, Gaskell Mew, & Tompsett, 2017). Fieldwork students are in direct contact with clients in social service agencies. For the benefit of clients students need to be prepared to interact in a safe and ethical way (Walton, 2005). Including social work practitioner input into the social work skills curriculum is important in order to maintain relevance to current practice contexts (O'Connor et al., 2009). A number of studies have been carried out on the skills new graduates require when moving into the workplace (Tham & Lynch, 2014; Wilson, 2013) but little research on skills required pre-placement particularly from a practitioner perspective (Hay et al., 2016). Given the broad range of skills that social workers use in practice generally there is a need to establish the key skills for social work students prior to placement (Trevithick, 2012).

This research was conducted with field educators involved with the University of Otago's social work programme. I chose to explore field educator perspectives on this issue as these social workers are knowledgeable about the range of skills needed in social work students and are able to comment from experience (Fook, Ryan, & Hawkins, 2000). Constructivist approach was used to guide the research (Morrow, 2005). Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the research questions with the field educators. The research question guiding the thesis is, what skills do social work students need prior to placement?

This introductory chapter also aims to put skills education into the wider social, economic and political context. I will use an ecosystems framework to discuss the influences on social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Social work education is influenced by global trends, government policy and social work organisations. Dominant narratives such as neoliberalism are in direct conflict with the aims of social work education. Social workers are required to be constantly alert to market driven arguments from neoliberal and managerial ideology. These arguments favour the market over principles like social justice and human rights (Hyslop, 2016).

Social work bodies such as the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) continue to advocate for values like social justice. Along with other professional bodies they have been responsible for embedding bicultural principles into the ethics of the profession. Social work educators, field educators, students and clients make up the people who are directly involved in the work of skills education. The arrangement of these people within the University of Otago social work programme will be discussed in order to provide background for this study. The purpose of discussing the wider environment in social work education is to ensure that the influence of organisation and government policy are made visible. These influences need to remain part of the broader discussion around social work skills education.

The ecosystems approach to skills education

The ecosystems approach in the social work context is a perspective that takes into account multiple influences on individual circumstances. It developed from biological models and has been a part of social work for over 50 years (Healy, 2014). An ecosystems approach views individuals as part of a wider environment. (Healy, 2014; Payne, 2014; Trevithick, 2012). The word 'environment' in this context relates to the systems that impact on individuals, including family, community, educational institutions, organisations and government (Healy, 2014). The three main systems that are analysed in this model are: the microsystem (individual), mesosystem (organisational) and macrosystem (government policy) (Healy, 2014). The strength of the ecosystems perspective is that it can be useful

in analysing environmental dynamics, whether the interest is the individual, family, community, organisational or policy (Connolly & Harms, 2015).

The ecosystems perspective to skills education is a useful way of analysing the social work education environment (Maidment, 2013). Maidment (2013) has used the ecosystems approach to create an eco-map of influences on social work education (Healy, 2014). These influences include university systems, agency systems and government legislation relating to education and social work practice (Beddoe & Keddell, 2016). Figure 1 uses an eco-map to illustrate this idea. The micro level of social work skills training is where social work academics, field educators, students and clients relate to each other. This is the area of social work education at which face-to-face interactions take place (Connolly & Harms, 2015). The influence of the micro level stakeholders on the systems of skills training are easy to see as these are the people who are physically involved in placement.

There are influences on skills education that are less visible than the micro level of skills education such as the influence of organisational policy (Healy, 2014). In the context of this thesis, these organisations are: the University of Otago, placement agencies, the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB), Tangata Whenua Voices in Social Work (TWVSW), the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Work (ANZASW), Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association (TWSWA), the Council of Social Work Educators Aotearoa New Zealand (CSWEANZ), and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). At the macrosystem level exists the government and global trends such as neoliberalism. The next part of this chapter will be dedicated to discussing the impact of these meso and macro systems on skills education.

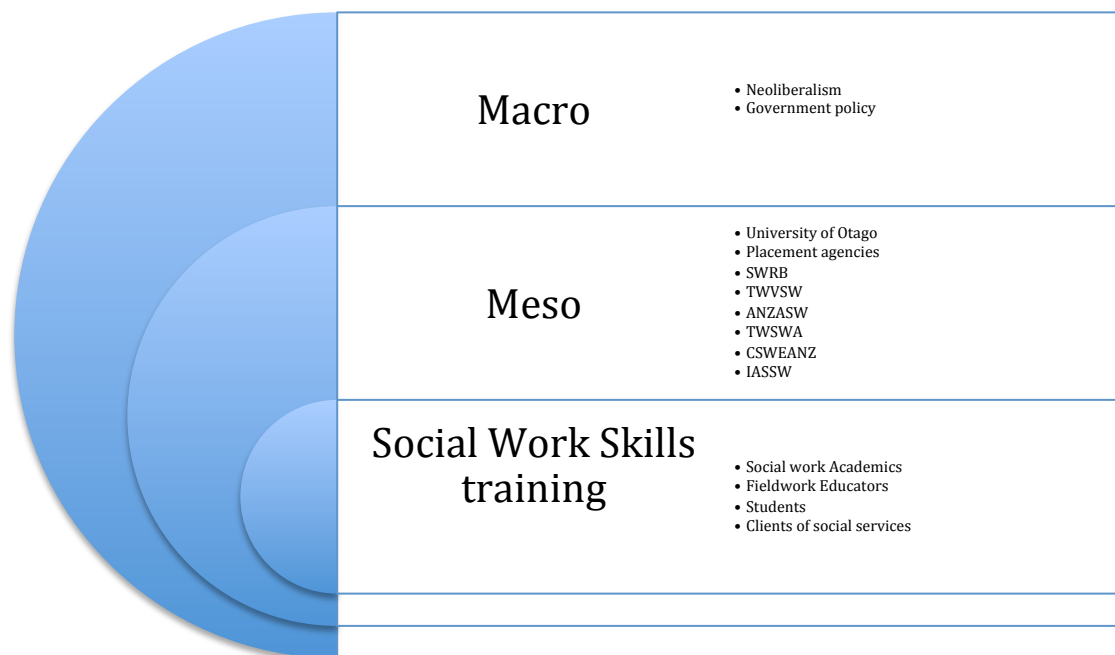


Figure 1 Ecomap of Social Work Skills Training (adapted from Healy, 2014; Maidment, 2013)

Neoliberalism and Social Work

Over the years neoliberalism has increasingly had an impact on social work education. This section discusses the conflict between neoliberalism and social work ideology and the link to social work skills education. Neoliberal ideology favours market driven practices as a way of managing social welfare and education (Gambrill, 2013). Since the 1980's, New Zealand has followed a global trend of increasing neoliberal market driven policy (Hyslop, 2016). These policies have led New Zealand towards a path of individualistic thinking and expecting individuals to be responsible for their own welfare. The paradox in this trend is that neoliberal ways of thinking create policies that increase the inequality between people, while also blaming those in poverty for their deprived situation (Gambrill, 2013). Viewing those in poverty as a creator of their own situation ignores a broader social work view such as ecosystems perspective that takes into account societal influences on inequality (Healy, 2014).

Policies that focus on economic growth and the influence of the market have affected social work at every level; the clients, social workers, agencies, education institutions, educators and students (Hyslop, 2016). Prioritising neoliberal agendas has led to managerialism being the dominant way in which social services

and social work education are organised (Gambrill, 2013). Managerialism involves working in ways that measure outcomes akin to a business model (Chong, Geare, & Willett, 2017). There is an inherent conflict in values between market driven thinking and social work values like human rights and social justice (Hyslop, 2016; Zuchowski, Hudson, Bartlett, & Diamandi, 2014).

A direct result of neoliberal policy is that social services and education are considered part of the market and are expected to perform like a business by demonstrating efficiency and outcomes (O'Brien, 2016). The government's neoliberal policies have had direct impact on funding for social service agencies and funding for social work education. Both social service agencies and social work education are working within low resources relative to the size of the task at hand (Ballantyne, Beddoe, Hay, Maidment, & Walker, 2017). Social workers both in agencies and in education are being asked to increase productivity with fewer resources (Ballantyne et al., 2017; Hyslop, 2013). As a participant in Hyslop's (2013) research said "... we're going to be fighting for every single resource that we've got ... the economic climate and the ideology of the government in power impacts on our day to day work." (p. 179). Social work students are currently caught in the middle of reduced resources for education and fieldwork agencies.

Funding restrictions on social work skills education impacts the time, energy and finances that are available for social work students. The reduction in funding for social work agencies means that social work students are venturing into agencies that are pressured for time and resources, and are not always able to provide ideal learning conditions (Maidment, 2003). It also means that some agencies are not prepared to offer placements given they receive no funding for having a student (Hay & Brown, 2015). Field educators of social work students are not paid (with the exception of external educators), and are doing the role voluntarily in order to further their own learning and to support the education of students who will eventually become their colleagues (Davys & Beddoe, 2010; Hay et al., 2016). Quality of placements and time to spend with students on skills education in the agency setting can be limited by these factors (Cleak & Wilson, 2013).

To complicate the situation, social work education is underfunded in New Zealand (Ballantyne et al, 2017). Funding for social work education does not take into account the money required to support social work students to develop their professional skills (Hay & Brown, 2015). At the University of Otago, the social work programme is housed within the Division of Humanities, which similarly to other universities is facing fiscal challenges (Chong et al., 2017). Social work academics are under pressure to maintain student numbers, while also maintaining a focus on quality skills training. Social work programmes are being asked to accept higher levels of students in order to increase financial viability (Chong et al, 2017). If social work programmes take students who are not suitable for social work training, this makes the task of teaching social work skills challenging for educators, both in the academic setting and in the field.

Social work skills training and fieldwork placements are arguably the most costly of papers offered within a social work programme (Maloney & Haines, 2016). Training students in the application of social work skills requires a higher proportion of staff to students in order to prepare students adequately for working in social services. It also requires the time for educators in the university setting to form good working relationships with educators in the field. These relationships are key in the development of social work skills as agencies are an important part of supporting students on placement (Hay et al, 2016).

In 2017 the government leadership changed from National to Labour. Time is yet to show if the change in government will result in policies that support the work of social workers both in education and social services. Government policies around funding education and social services have a direct affect on skills education (Zuchowski et al, 2014). Additionally, government legislation around the role of professional bodies in social work also affects social work education (Hay et al, 2016).

Social Work professional bodies

Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work currently has two main professional bodies: Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) and Aotearoa New Zealand

Association of Social Workers (ANZASW). Both these professional bodies have an involvement in social work education. The formation of the SWRB has been closely linked with the ANZASW structure. In the 1990's, ANZASW began to focus on the benefits of regulating the profession (Hunt, 2017). This was not without its controversy, with some social workers recognising that by regulating the profession the ANZASW was inviting the government to influence the social work profession through legislation (Hunt, 2017). In 1999, the Labour government made Social Workers Registration a priority during its election term and, in 2003, the Social Workers Registration Act (SWRA) was implemented (Hunt, 2017). The Act established the SWRB as an agent of the crown (*Social Work Registration Act*, 2003). Since the SWRB board was formed in 2003, it has had an increasing impact on social work profession, including social work education.

The SWRB has been closely aligned with the government of the day, both as a crown entity and through their efforts to seek mandatory registration (Hunt, 2017; *Social Work Registration Act*, 2003). The SWRB has the power to shape social work education through its policies on social work education. In order for social work students to get registration post qualification, the social work programme must have the SWRB seal of approval (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016b). Social work programmes must meet recognised standards of staffing, fieldwork, course content and admission criteria (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016b). SWRB educational standards have become increasingly specific in relation to skills. For example, the Social Workers Registration Board, Programme Recognition Standards (2016) has a clause saying: "In preparation for field education, the programme will provide social work skills teaching that develops interpersonal skills, self-awareness, social and emotional competence, appropriate professional conduct, reflection practice, awareness of the importance of supervision and risk assessment" (p. 5). Prior to this clause, the policy that guided field education did not include the skills of "self awareness, social and emotional competence" or "appropriate professional conduct" but did include the other skills (Social Workers Registration Board, 2013; 2016b, p. 5).

The SWRB has used other professional bodies such as the ANZASW and IASSW to guide the formation of its standards so they do not conflict with one another (Ballantyne et al, 2017). An emphasis on improving skills for the social work profession was one of the arguments for the existence of social worker registration (Beddoe, 2014; Hunt, 2017). While an improvement in skills education is a goal that few would argue with, it is imperative that the social work profession remains cognisant of who is setting the standards for the profession (Ballantyne et al, 2017; Beddoe, 2014). SWRB and ANZASW have both been able to use their power to positive effect in some areas. Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi and creating standards around bicultural practice has been something that both organisations have ensured are embedded in their documents (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2007; Social Workers Registration Board, 2017).

Bicultural practice

Acknowledging skills to work with Māori has been an increasing focus in the social work profession since the mid 1980's (Hollis-English, 2012). The release of the Puao-te-ata-tu report in 1986 meant that social workers working within Pākehā organisations were more easily able to use methods that aligned with Te Ao Māori (Hollis-English, 2012). As mentioned above, social work professional bodies have increasingly worked to prioritise bicultural practice as a way of working (Hunt, 2017). The first competency outlined in the SWRB practice standard is competence to work with Māori (Social Workers Registration Board, 2017). The ANZASW incorporated the competency into its constitution by creating a separate caucus and including biculturalism in its code of practice (Eketone & Walker, 2015).

In recent years, further groups of professionals have been formed in order to ensure ways of practicing with Māori are strengthened (McNabb, 2015; Walsh-Tapiata, 2004). Currently there are two social work bodies for Māori social workers: the Tangata Whenua Association of Social Work (TWASW) and Tangata Whenua Voices in Social Work (TWVSW). The acknowledgement of Māori having

the right to self-determination - Tino Rangatiratanga - remains an important issue in today's social work practice and education (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016a). While organisations may have Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) enshrined in their policies and procedures, monocultural ways of practicing remain within organisations and in social work practice (Eketone & Walker, 2015). This discrepancy between a professed commitment to bicultural practice and the reality of Pākehā cultural dominance in social work is an issue for social work education and will be explored continually throughout the thesis (Eketone & Walker, 2015).

Social work still has significant work to do before it is practicing in a bicultural manner throughout its professional bodies, organisations and educational programmes (Walsh-Tapiata, 2004). In 2016, SWRB worked with Tangata Whenua Voices of Social Work to review the competency standard relating to working with Māori. The result of this work was the Kaitiakitanga framework that guides social workers competency to work with Māori (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016a). The creation of frameworks such as the Kaitiakitanga, alongside a crown entity like SWRB, gives hope that monocultural, neoliberal ways of working will not go without challenge. Such challenges are important for skills education that is under pressure to act out the dominant narrative of market driven, monocultural policies (Chong et al, 2017).

Social Justice in Social Work

A number of social workers debate the influence of the government on the social work profession and seek ways to ensure that social justice issues are not made invisible (Hunt, 2017; Hyslop, 2016). Social workers cannot ignore the fact that regulation of the social work profession by a crown entity (SWRB) has the potential to undermine the social justice practice of social work (Hunt, 2017). Social justice values are a core of the social work profession and often social workers are advocating for clients against the practices of government institutions and advocating for government changes to benefit the wider community (Hyslop, 2016). If the government of the day favours a neoliberal viewpoint that concentrates on the economy over education, and is also involved in the regulation

of social work education, this clearly puts social work educators in an ethical dilemma (Hyslop, 2016).

Social work educators along with other social workers are asked to follow SWRB guidelines while also remaining critical of government policy (Hyslop, 2016). Social work educators consist of the social workers both within social work training programmes and within social service agencies that provide education to students. As Hyslop (2016) points out social workers including educators could be a “powerful voice for social justice” (p. 1). Social work educators continue to discuss ways to make a difference within the current environment in their practice, in academic articles, through collective action and more recently social media (Hyslop, 2016; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2016). The Internet provides a forum for social workers to debate and challenge social norms in the form of social media sites and blogs. Facebook has a number of social work forums, including a forum called Rebel Social Work, which provides an opportunity for social workers to discuss and critique systems of all types including government and education. A website called Reimagining Social Work has regular articles and often has commentary on social work education (The RSW Collective, 2017). CSWEANZ, council of social work educators, is a body that can advocate for social justice issues with the SWRB and provide comment on legislation that affects social work education. Social workers can use the ecosystems perspective to evaluate and critique influences on social work education. As illustrated by Figure 1 the ecosystems perspective can also demonstrate that there are some core groups in social work education. This microsystems level of social work will be discussed next.

Skills education within Social Work Programmes

Social work academics influence the nature of social work skills education, as do students, clients and social workers that are involved in fieldwork education. Social work academics involved in fieldwork coordination in New Zealand meet twice a year to discuss common issues. This group is a sub committee of CSWEANZ. While the specific ways in which skills are taught differ around the country there are some commonalities (Hay & O'Donoghue, 2009). Students

participate in skills training alongside other papers that teach social work knowledge and support social work students to explore their values (Ballantyne et al., 2016a).

There is variation in the ways social work programmes arrange the first fieldwork placement. Some have a smaller placement to begin with in order to orientate students to practice. At the University of Otago, fieldwork placement takes place in the third and fourth year of a four-year degree. Prior to embarking on the first fieldwork placement students must pass a practice skills paper. This paper is designed to prepare students for fieldwork placement. As it is held over one semester, it only gives tertiary staff and students three months to cover this material. Therefore material for this course needs to be prioritised.

The ways in which social work students learn skills varies from student to student depending on their path to social work (Trevithick, 2012). Some students come to social work education having been involved in social service work and coming with a set of skills already in place. At the University of Otago an increasing number of students are enrolling in social work education in their early twenties with no previous experience in the social service sector (Roxborough, 2016). This means that social work educators are tasked with supporting students to learn skills, knowledge and values of social work without necessarily having the experience to draw on (Leveridge, 2003). The University of Otago social work programme was originally set up to support those in the profession to get qualifications (Roxborough, 2016). In an era where the majority of students come straight from school into University there is a need to know how social work skills are taught prior to placement (Carey & McCardle, 2011).

This chapter has discussed the influences of government and organisational pressures on social work education. Skills education is influenced by government policy, particularly through the SWRB, which operates as a crown entity. The SWRB, along with other social work groups, have made positive changes in some areas of practice, particularly bicultural practice. There is room for growth and further improvements to be made within skills education. Social work educators

attempt to keep social justice issues visible through collective forums both online and offline. The University of Otago social work programme is the setting in which this research takes place.

Thesis outline

This thesis has seven chapters. Chapter 2 is a literature review of previous research that starts to answer the question: what skills should social work students be taught prior to placement? There are significant studies both overseas and within New Zealand, but there are no studies that have answered the question in a way that could be incorporated into New Zealand social work training with ease. Chapter 3 will explore social work education approaches relating to skills development in adults. Developmental models help understand the building blocks of skill development within social work training and social work practice. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology used in the study. Constructivism guided the methodology, including design, method and data analysis. The method and study limitations are described in Chapter 4. Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings of the study and the implications of these findings in light of previous research. Chapter 7 offers the conclusion. It discusses the relevance of the research for social work education and advocates for further research in the area of skills development.

Chapter 2: Skill preparation prior to placement

Introduction

Chapter 1 outlined the environment that surrounds social work skills education. This chapter explores the literature on skills education. At the outset there is a lack of research in the area of skills education prior to placement in New Zealand (Gockel & Burton, 2014). The literature for this research comes from studies exploring social work skills and social work education. Fig 2 illustrates that these two fields of research contain the subset of studies around skills that students need prior to placement. This chapter begins with a discussion of the skills that are considered important in general for the profession. It then moves on to outlining research that explores skills taught within social work education. The chapter also considers bicultural social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, a point of difference in comparison to other countries.

New Zealand based research provides the contextual knowledge on what social work skills are currently taught within social work education institutions (Ballantyne et al., 2016b; Fouché, Beddoe, Bartley, & Parkes, 2016). Further afield the United Kingdom has used a capabilities framework to define the skills they expect students to learn prior to placement (Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2014). Literature on this framework highlights the importance of including field educator's opinion in the curriculum of social work skills education (Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2014). Social work education needs to ensure that it maintains pace with changes in the social work service environment (Hay et al., 2016; Mirabito, 2012).

Social work skills

The skills required for student social workers prior to placement is a subset of the broader field of social work skills (see Fig 2). The lack of studies in New Zealand on skills education prior to placement, requires a look at the broader area of skills research. This enables us to ascertain the subset of skills that social workers need within their professional lives (Gockel & Burton, 2014).

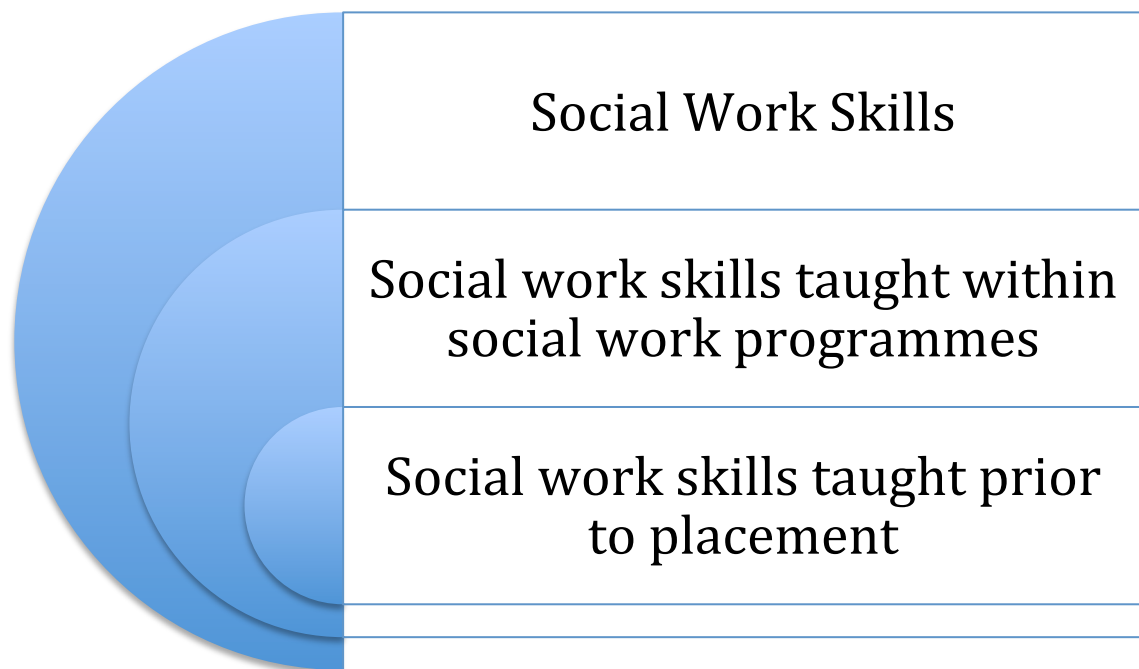


Figure 2 Subset - Social work skills taught prior to placement

A number of social work academics have explored social work skills in depth and have come up with a range of social work skills required in practice (Doel, 2012; Thompson, 2015b; Trevithick, 2012). While these authors are discussing skills in general rather than the skills needed prior to placement, the research gives building blocks to work from in order to establish the skills needed prior to placement. Trevithick (2012) has written extensively on skills within social work including skills for social work education (Richards, Ruch, & Trevithick, 2005; Trevithick, 2003, 2014; Trevithick, Richards, Ruch, & Moss, 2004). Trevithick (2012) developed a list of eighty skills she considered to be most prevalent in social work. Trevithick (2012) points out that these do not constitute the entirety of social work skills but are a list of those considered most important for general social work. The list consists mainly of interpersonal skills with the addition of the following skills; managing emotion, ethics, technology and formal writing (Trevithick, 2012). Trevithick's (2012) work provides a good basis for comparison with others who have recently discussed the subject of social work skills.

Thompson (2015a) provides a list of thirty skills divided "into three main categories: personal effectiveness, interaction skills and intervention skills" (p.

xv). This publication described the kind of skills needed for any profession working with people (Thompson, 2015a). In another publication Thompson (2015b) names 16 categories of skills relevant to social work practice. A number of these skills align with Trevithick's (2012) list specifically communication, self-awareness, and reflection and presentation skills. However, Thompson (2015b) includes some categories that are not discussed by Trevithick (2012) including "thinking on your feet", humility and survival skills (p. 113).

Doel (2012) is less ambitious in his discussion of social work skills. As he points out "social work does not have a single, unique skill but the set of skills comprising social work is distinctive and specific to social work. These skills are marked by the fact that they are so wide-ranging. A list can never be exhaustive" (Doel, 2012, p. 136). Doel (2012) goes on to attempt a list of skills that also includes communication skills. Doel's (2012) suggestion that the generation of theory is a primary skill of social work could hint at Doel's particular bias. While generation of theory is an important part of social work, this is primarily the role of social work academics and the majority of the profession may never use this skill. Other skills that Doel (2012) lists, however, reflect those of other writers. For example, his endorsement that social workers think critically in their approach to policy and continue learning through their professional lives (Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). This inventory of skills within broader social work can help narrow down the skills that should be taught within education.

Skills training within social work education.

Exploring skills taught over the entire time a student is undertaking social work training is the next step towards narrowing down skills that might be useful prior to placement. Various education institutions have different methods of measuring the skills that students are expected to develop in their training (Cleak, Hawkins, Laughton, & Williams, 2015; Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). The lack of cohesion across social work programmes on skills education has led to attempts to curriculum standardisation attempts both locally and globally (Cleak et al., 2015; Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). For example in Victoria, Australia a group of social work programmes (the Combined School of Social Work) have attempted to standardise

practice using an assessment tool that includes social work skills (Cleak et al, 2015). Cleak et al (2015) outline in their research the process that led to the Combined School of Social Work formulating the Common Assessment Tool. The seven areas of this tool include skills that a student is expected to learn during the course of their social work study (Cleak et al, 2015). Critical reflection and developing relationships are mentioned. These skills mostly align with other studies on social work skills in education and with concepts outlined in social work professional standards (Cleak et al, 2015; Trevithick, 2012; Sewpaul & Jones, 2004).

Social work educators do not agree on all the skills that they think are important (Cleak et al, 2016; Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). Cleak et al (2015) suggest that the skill “to manage one’s future career” (p. 55) is a necessary requirement for students to master during their training. While the emphasis on continual professional development may be a core component of the social work profession (Social Workers Registration Board, 2017) the phrasing of this particular skill is an anomaly in comparison to other research (Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). In 2004 Sewpaul & Jones published a document which detailed “Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training” (p. 495) These are similar to objectives of the Common Assessment Tool but on a global scale created for the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and International Federation of Social Work (IFSW). These standards relate less to the level of achievement that a student is expected to reach and instead relates to the standard at which social work should be taught. The following skills are identified; self-reflection, working across diversity, assessment, intervention, research and critical thought. The standards acknowledge that social work practice will differ according to the country and context that surrounds it. In Aotearoa New Zealand one key skill exists as a point of difference from practices in comparison to other countries.

Bicultural practice

Working across cultures is critical to social work practice. In New Zealand this means acquiring the skill to work with Māori (Eketone & Walker, 2015). It is useful in the discussion of preparation for practice to consider research on

bicultural skill. Working biculturally is defined by Eketone & Walker (2015) as a Non-Māori working with Māori within New Zealand. The SWRB requires that all social workers are competent to work with Māori. The SWRB uses three terms to outline the skills expected of social workers Te Rangatiratanga, Te Manaakitanga and Te Whanaungatanga (Social Workers Registration Board, 2017). These Māori terms could be interpreted as respecting Māori self-determination (Te Rangatiratanga), showing care and support (Te Manaakitanga), and creating reciprocal relationships (Moorfield, 2017).

According to Hay & O'Donoghue (2009) the area of bicultural education is difficult to navigate within social work. Whilst social work bodies such as the SWRB advocate for the importance of bicultural practice, bicultural education has not always been prioritised within social work education (Hay & O'Donoghue, 2009). Social work programmes along with other social work institutions profess to be committed to Te Tiriti o Waitangi yet three educational institutions surveyed had no specific outcome in fieldwork assessment to ensure students were demonstrating this skill (Hay & O'Donoghue, 2009). This highlights an issue within education and organisations where bicultural principles do not necessarily translate into bicultural practice (Eketone & Walker, 2015).

A number of writers have attempted to address skills for working with Māori and provide expectations for social work students. Eketone & Walker (2015) outline skills they feel are important for social work students to demonstrate when working with Māori: "These include *mihimihi* (introduction of yourself), *waiata* (appropriate cultural songs in appropriate cultural circumstances), *karakia* (prayers for opening and closing meetings) and *pōwhiri* (ritual welcoming)" (p. 111). These skills need to take place in the context of social worker students also developing their self-awareness and critical thinking (Eketone & Walker, 2015; Walker, 2012).

In the social work training literature the importance of cultural skills is emphasised (Briggs, 2016; Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). Practitioners are encouraged to be aware of their own culturally background and the underlying

assumptions that accompany this (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). Essentially if we are working with someone who is Māori and we are not Māori we need to be aware that our perspective could be different. Māori academics writing about skills advocate using models that are based on a Māori worldview (Durie, 2011; Eketone, 2008; Ruwhiu, 2013).

The use of Māori concepts in bicultural frameworks is the best way to ensure the advancement of Māori (Durie, 2011; Eketone, 2008). Durie (2011) suggests that taking a positive as opposed to deficit approach with Māori offers the best way forward. Ruwhiu (2013) explores three aspects of cultural awareness that he considers important in the creation of cultural understanding. These three aspects can be summarised as acknowledging the importance of history, narratives and “Māori concepts of well-being” (Ruwhiu, 2013, p.130). The Kaitikitangi framework is a good example of Māori being involved in creating a social work skills framework to work with Māori (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016a). Tangata Whenua Voices in Social Work in partnership with other Māori and Tau iwi social workers created the Kaitikitangi framework for social work practice. In Māori and English the Kaitikitangi framework outlines a model of competence to work with Māori for social workers. Included in the framework is a discussion about skills along with knowledge and language (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016a). While it is aimed primarily at social workers in practice rather than social work students it provides a valuable framework to work towards.

Aotearoa New Zealand Research

Social work is a context driven practice and while it is useful to look at international research, local studies are more likely to align with practice in Aotearoa, New Zealand (Fouché et al., 2016). In New Zealand a project to establish a capability framework for social work began in 2016. This project is called enhanceR2P and is a three-year project that aims to establish a framework for graduating social workers (EnhanceR2P research team, 2016a). The project is aimed at developing “**a Professional Capabilities Framework** clarifying the capabilities of NQSWs (newly qualified social workers) and social workers at

experienced, advanced and expert levels of practice” (EnhanceR2P research team, 2016b para 2). Part of this study includes the mapping of the social work programme curriculum in New Zealand. This provides valuable information about what skills are being taught within social work programmes. The first stage of the project has obtained course documents from 14 social work education institutions and analysed the words that are used to describe course content (Ballantyne et al., 2016a; Ballantyne et al., 2016b). Included in the analysis of social work educators course documents regarding are terms related to skill (Ballantyne et al., 2016a). This research has given a valuable snapshot of what New Zealand social work providers consider important in skill education. The following table (Table 1) is adapted from the information on skills within the taxonomy report (Ballantyne et al., 2016b).

Table 1 Social work skills within New Zealand social work programmes

advocacy	assessment
brokerage	interview
casework	negotiation
collaboration	networking
communication	problem-solving
counselling	project management
critical thinking	recordkeeping
cultural competence	referral
community engagement	reflective practice
evaluation	self-awareness

facilitation

team work

interpersonal

intervention

Adapted from (Ballantyne et al., 2016b, pp. 15-16)

The table shows the skills that are currently being taught within the social work curriculum. Skills to work with Māori were also mentioned within the Ballantyne et al's taxonomy. These skills include bicultural practice, Te Reo Māori (Māori language) and kaupapa Māori (Māori principles). A number of the social work skills in Table 1 align with those considered important by other researchers (Ballantyne et al., 2017; Trevithick, 2012). Ballantyne et al (2017) are not alone in an interest in skills practiced within the New Zealand context. A recent publication on social work skills addresses the use of practice skill in social work and social welfare both in Australia and New Zealand (Maidment & Egan, 2016). Contributors to the edited collection describe different aspects of social work skills and make explicit the relationship between skill, values and knowledge (Maidment & Egan, 2016). Unlike the other authors discussed earlier Maidment and Egan (2016) do not attempt a list of skills other than to outline specific micro counselling skills. It is possible to deduce the skills they believe are important for students to learn as the publication is aimed at social work students (Maidment & Egan, 2016).

The skills outlined in Maidment and Egan's (2016) book include both skills that are used in all social work spheres and skills that are specific to different fields of practice. The skills are explored within specific contexts such as assessment with Torres Strait Island and Aboriginal peoples and working with families in a statutory setting (Miller, 2016; Muller, 2016). Overall the text covers critical reflection, cross-cultural practice, managing technology, community work, communication skills, assessment, assessment with Māori, intervention, group work and research (Maidment & Egan, 2016).

Hay and O'Donoghue (2009) analysed the assessment processes of 6 New Zealand Universities in order to establish and compare the learning outcomes of fieldwork.

Hay and O'Donoghue (2009) divided their results into "three areas of values, knowledge and skills" (p. 45). All the Universities in the study expected to obtain basic interpersonal skills (Hay & O'Donoghue, 2009). Another commonality amongst the institutions was the expectation that students would develop the ability to use supervision effectively. Most of the Universities had specific outcomes related to critical reflection on practice and being proactive about learning. Two of the Universities involved in the study did not include working with other cultures and diversity. And three institutions had no outcome that related to a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Out of this study Hay and O'Donoghue (2009) proposed a set of national standards that also links with previously mentioned IFSW, SWRB and ANZASW competencies/standards. In their proposal recognition of the skills to work with Māori comes first on their list. Following this is the skill to work with "different ethnic and cultural" groups. Also included is reflective practice, the skill to relate theory to practice, relationship building and use of supervision (Hay & O'Donoghue, 2009). While this study was related to social work education its main focus was the learning outcomes from fieldwork placement not learning outcomes prior to fieldwork (Hay & O'Donoghue, 2009). These New Zealand authors have identified skills that are being used within the social work curriculum. It would be useful however to narrow down the specific skills useful to learn prior to placement.

Social work skills prior to placement

Social work practitioners and academics agree that preparing social work students for placement is a necessary step in the education journey (Bogo, Lee, McKee, Baird, & Ramjattan, 2016; Douglas, 2008; Walton, 2005). Pre-placement learning increases student skill when they embark on placement (Kamali et al., 2017). Walton (2005) points out that students on placement are directly involved in the lives of clients and therefore for the wellbeing of clients need to be adequately prepared for this contact. The content of social work education programmes about skills education needs to be carefully considered (Walton, 2005).

In New Zealand social work students are required to be prepared for fieldwork placement with appropriate skills (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016b). Most of the content of skills education prior to placement, however, is not universally agreed upon and is not clearly defined in research (Ballantyne et al, 2017; (Ballantyne et al., 2017; Furness & Gilligan, 2004; O'Connor et al., 2009). The exception to this is communication skills (Trevithick, 2012). This has been part of the social work education curriculum for a number of years in a number of countries (Dixon, 2012; Flynn et al., 2014; Gockel & Burton, 2014).

In the United Kingdom, a Professional Capability Framework (PCF) has been created giving direction on what students should know prior to their first placement (The British Association of Social Workers, n.d). The PCF is designed to measure capability across the professional life of a social worker including within social work education. The framework identifies the skills, knowledge and values that are expected prior to the first placement. Regarding skills students are required to “demonstrate basic communication skills, ability to engage with users, capacity to work as a member of an organisation, willingness to learn from feedback and supervision and demonstrate basic SW values, knowledge and skills in order to be able to make effective use of the first practice placement” (The British Association of Social Workers, n.d, p. 1). Further analysis shows that within the framework critical reflection and basic knowledge of formal writing as well as risk assessment are also considered important. Moriarty and Manthorpe, (2014) have investigated the underpinning research on the PCF and its relevance to social work curriculum. They conclude “that while the PCF should help clarify what is expected of social workers at different stages of their career unresolved tensions will continue if employers and educators cannot establish a consensus about which topics, and in what depth, are to be included on generic qualifying programmes” (Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2014 p. 78).

As previously discussed New Zealand’s social work board has recently become more specific on the skills that must be taught to students prior to placement. Their instruction to social work programmes is as follows:

In preparation for field education, the programme will provide social work skills teaching that develops interpersonal skills, self-awareness, social and emotional competence, appropriate professional conduct, reflection practice, awareness of the importance of supervision and risk assessment (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016b, p. 5).

Guidelines from social work bodies allows social work and educators to have an indication of what is expected during the pre-placement phase of training however, as Moriarty and Manthorpe (2014) point out this does not necessarily translate to agreement on social work curriculum. Moriarty and Manthorpe (2014) suggest more research is needed in order to support the education of social work students and to benefit the profession as a whole. Exploring the research that underpins the decision-making on the choice of skills means that we understand the reasoning behind the preparation of students with specific skills (Karpētis, 2017; Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2014).

Numerous studies are available on the effectiveness of particular pre-placement training. Unfortunately these studies do not outline in detail the content of what they teach (Bogo et al., 2016; Bogo et al., 2011; Gockel & Burton, 2014; Logie, Bogo, Regehr, & Regehr, 2013; Walton, 2005). For example on first glance an article written by Bogo et al (2016) seems like it might have something to say about this topic as it specifically mentions fieldwork opinion on pre-placement preparation. On closer inspection the article is an evaluation of a particular assessment tool within one social work programme and the results are difficult to transfer to other situations. Bogo et al (2016) refer to pre-placement skills preparation but do not outline the contents of the skills course. Hay et al (2016) sought fieldwork opinion on student readiness for placement. They found that participants were happy with how students were being prepared for placement including skills. The parts of the questionnaire related to skill were “(1) knowledge of social work theory and practice; (2) the ability to work independently; (3) effective oral and written skills; (4) understanding and application of ethical conduct; (5) ability to build effective relationships with clients; (6) ability to build effective relationships with colleagues; (7) commitment to bicultural practice; (8) behaves in a professional and appropriate way; (9) is

able to effectively utilise supervision; and (10) is proactive about addressing and challenging organisational systems” (Hay et al., 2016, p. 43).

Studies that outline skills taught prior to placement are in agreement about some skills but differ on others. Academics, practitioners and students agree that communication skills are an important skill to learn prior to placement (Dixon, 2012; Domakin, 2014; Flynn et al., 2014; Gockel & Burton, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2009; Rogers & Welch, 2009). Researchers in this area also tend to agree on the following skills: written communication, assessment, reflective practice, self-awareness critical thinking, and relationship building (Bogo et al., 2011; Leveridge, 2003; O'Connor et al., 2009; Wilson, 2013). Some of the skills that were mentioned in other studies but not universally discussed by all researchers were skills in cultural work, intervention, court appearances, “safety, grant writing”, technology, ethics, self care and emotional resilience (Bogo et al, 2011; Kamali et al, 2017 p. 5; Maidment, 2013).

Preparing students with the skills they need to manage the emotional aspect of social work has been given much attention (Beddoe & Maidment, 2009; Grant & Kinman, 2014; Grant, Kinman, & Baker, 2015; Maidment, 2003). O'Connor et al (2009) undertook a mixed method study to ascertain the usefulness of pre-placement learning at London University. The participants of this study were students and were asked to consider what helped or hindered their preparation for placement in relation to their academic learning. Students identified the skills listed above alongside some other skills that were subsequently incorporated into the curriculum. These included self-management, self-awareness, emotional regulation, managing conflict and teamwork. O'Connor et al (2009) concluded that they underestimated the personal development students needed for placement preparation.

Social work courses need to prepare students for the emotional impact of fieldwork placement (Grant et al, 2015). This involves highlighting to students the ways of developing emotional resilience (Grant et al, 2015). Grant et al, (2015) define emotional resilience as the “ability to demonstrate resourcefulness,

maintain an optimistic outlook, utilise appropriate coping mechanisms and draw effectively on sources of support” (p. 2353). Resilience does not require students to be unaffected by the stresses and emotions of placement but have some ability to recover from these stresses (Grant et al, 2015). In practical terms this involves social work training teaching students to know how to be self-aware and to develop the capacity to reflect, particularly in supervision (Maidment, 2013).

Other potential ways of developing resilience within the curriculum were based on time management and mindfulness (Grant et al, 2015). Time management strategies along with self-care are some of the ways in which students can support their own stress management (Maidment, 2013). Another skill area that has gained increasingly attention within social work research is the ability to manage conflict, aggression and safety: (Maidment, 2003; O’Connor et al, 2009; Wilson, 2013). Other students indicated that they wanted to learn safety, self-care and conflict management. This was identified as a gap in pre-placement training and something that students wanted more training on (Kamali et al, 2017). This aligns with earlier Australasian research by Maidment (2003) where she recommended that students be prepared to handle the difficult and harmful situations they might come across. The social work educators in Grant et al (2015) point out that supporting emotional resilience and safety and in social work students is not just the responsibility of the social work academy. Field educators also have responsibility as do social service organisations.

Students are being required to obtain complex skills without the benefit of prior experience (Carey & McCardle, 2011; O’Connor et al., 2009). As discussed previously in the first chapter students are coming to training at a younger age with less experience in working with people (Leveridge, 2003). They also have less experience in the workplace and less experience with self-directed ways of learning (Leveridge, 2003). Field educators in Walton (2005) talked about the hard work that is involved when a student comes to them unprepared for placement learning and needing guidance in basic social work skills. Feedback from these field educators suggested more preparation was needed for students both in knowledge about the role of social work and in basic social work skills

(Walton, 2005). While it is important not to stereotype a whole generation (Bogo et al, 2016) it is useful not to ignore the gaps in learning that might exist in students who have had less experience in the workplace (Carey & McCardle, 2011; O'Connor et al, 2009; Walton, 2005).

Younger students have much to learn in terms of self-awareness, assessment skills and confidence in communicating with a wide range of people (Bogo et al, 2016; Walton, 2005). Some institutions have attempted to overcome this by instituting a shadowing experience in order to prepare students for practice (Carey & McCardle, 2011; Massey University, 2017; O'Connor et al., 2009). Shadowing a social worker prior to placement has been shown to support students to begin developing the skills of self-awareness, critical thinking and ethical decision making particularly when they have not been exposed to social service practice before (Carey & McCardle, 2011). The studies described in this section have drawn on various aspects of social work education to explore the preparation of social work students prior to placement. This includes contributions from social work academics, field educators and students.

Field educators input into skills education

Involving field educators in skills education of social work student is supported by research, universities, social work educators and the SWRB (Bogo et al., 2016; Hay et al, 2016; Social Workers Registration Board, 2016b). It is important to invite the inclusion of field educators in studies to do with social work education as they are affected by student social work skills or the lack of them (Hay et al, 2016; Mirabito, 2012). Mirabito (2012) suggests that by improving social work education in the areas that field educators identify, academia will remain responsive to practice environments. While Mirabito (2012) is writing primarily for the United States context the desire to ensure that social work education remains relevant for the practice world is applicable to New Zealand (Hay & Brown, 2015; Hay et al, 2016). In an unpublished work entitled "Wisdom from the field: Field instructors' perceptions of skills needed for social work practice" Mirabito (2001, cited in Mirabito, 2012, p. 253) found that field educators wanted social work students to be educated in "communication, the use of computer and

technological literacy, as well as ethical and critical thinking” (Mirabito, 2012, p. 250). Mirabito (2012) suggests “excellent verbal and written communication skills are essential for effective social work practice” (p. 250).

Gaining further understanding regarding field educator’s perspectives on student capabilities is not an area that has been fully explored (Hay & Brown, 2015; Hay et al, 2016). Bogo (2015) suggests that what is needed is a greater input from practicing social workers into the curriculum. A partnership between academics and practicing social workers would benefit the joint goal of educating social work students (Bogo, 2015). This might go some way to addressing the perception that field educators have that social work education is not grounded in the realities of current practice (Domakin, 2014). Bogo (2015) is realistic about the political, financial and structural constraints against this type of partnership and points out that it is frequently academia that benefits more from this type of partnership than social workers themselves.

Having social work students that are as ready as they can be for practice benefits everyone involved; agencies, managers, field educators, fieldwork coordinators, the students and last but not least the clients (Mirabito, 2012). The current SWRB policy regarding social work education states that the “curriculum will be designed to ensure that the graduate...will integrate relevant social work theory, research, ethical values and practice for achieving core knowledge, processes, values and skills for contemporary social work practice in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally” (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016b, p. 4). Higgins (2016) suggest that there is a difference between the skills valued within agencies and those that the academy concentrates on. Agencies have a tendency to value the abilities to assess and write reports while social work education is more interested in theory and critical thinking (Higgins et al., 2016). While social work educators are encouraged to incorporate practice views into the curriculum (Domakin, 2014), they are also cautioned against solely concentrating on the needs of the market place (Ballantyne et al., 2017; Hyslop, 2016). Social work educators do not want to be caught in a position where the profession is dictated to by neoliberal ideology (Hyslop, 2016). To adequately address tensions of

choosing specific skills it is useful to explore field educator perspective on skills that would be useful for students to learn prior to placement (Foote, 2015; Mirabito, 2012).

Conclusion

Chapter 3 has drawn on social work skills research in order to create a starting point for pre-placement skills education. There is considerable amount of research within the topic of social work education yet there is little that identifies skills that would prove useful to students prior to placement. The studies that give an overview of social work skills needed prior to placement are located outside of New Zealand. An exploration of skills necessary for current social work placements in the New Zealand context would address a gap that exists in research. Social work educators already have a large quantity of content to teach in a generalised qualification therefore prioritising of material is necessary (Mirabito, 2012). What priority should be given to specific skills prior to placement? This was the origin of this research. The comparison of different authors writing about skills shows this is a contested area and there is not a consensus about which skills are most important for social work students (Beddoe, 2014). This is the gap in which this research hopes to address.

Chapter 3: Learning social work skills

Introduction

The following chapter outlines social work education approaches relevant to skill development. There is a need to bridge the gap from classroom to placement by supporting skills that are transferable (Bogo, Lee, McKee, Ramjattan, & Baird, 2017). Experiential learning, reflective practice and critical thinking are three student learning approaches that can provide a foundation for other skills to develop (Grant & Kinman, 2014; Thompson, 2015b). A number of studies have provided a model for the progressive development of skills in students (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980; Fook et al., 2000). These studies show how skill is developed over time. A competence-based approach to education also provides some guidance for skill development. While competency-based approaches have their place in skills education there is a discrepancy between rule-bound approaches to skills education and the complexity of human lives (Ruch, 2002).

Experiential Learning

Experiential models of learning particularly role-plays are a key method of learning social work skills prior to placement (Costello, 2016). Experiential models suggest that doing something and then reflecting on it is an efficient way of learning skills (Kolb, 1984). An example of this is when students act out social work interviews in the classroom and then discuss the encounter afterwards in order to learn what they might improve on in the future (Costello, 2016). Experiential learning can teach skills more effectively than didactic education (Kolb, 1984). Experience in this chapter refers to the experiences students have in the classroom but also relates to fieldwork placement experiences.

Kolb (1984) created a model of experiential learning that helps explain the important stages of learning through experience. Kolb's (1984) model outlines four cyclical stages that develop learning from experience; concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). In plain language for a student Kolb's (1984) model involves the process of a student having an experience, followed by taking the time to critique

the experience and then come up with ways to improve their actions. The last stage of this model is using what was learnt to inform behaviour when a similar situation occurs. The model has been the foundation of other theories of learning including Schon's (1983) model of reflective practice that will be discussed later in the chapter. The essential key to learning from experience is not the experience itself but the way in which the learning informs future behaviour (Thompson, 2015a).

Given that we know how effective experiential learning is, social work educators need to be creative about how they include this learning technique in the classroom (Grant, Kinman, & Alexander, 2014). Tham & Lynch's (2014) study of graduating social work students shows that students understand the value of experiential learning. Students valued the skills they learned in the classroom through experiential learning (Tham & Lynch, 2014). Social work students are deliberately exposed to multiple experiences when on fieldwork placement, however, these are challenging to include in the classroom (Grant et al, 2014). Grant et al's (2014) research on the skills of emotional intelligence indicated that experiential learning and encouragement of reflective practice are possible in the classroom. These two approaches can support student skills in preparation for fieldwork placement.

Reflective practice

Argyris and Schon (1974 cited in Fook & Gardner, 2007) were the first to relate reflective practice to the education of professional practitioners. Since then it has been developed by other academics to support students to learn (Fook & Gardner, 2007). Schon (1983) studied the way professionals used skills and found that professionals can learn skills through reflection-in-action. Reflection-in-action is defined as the process practitioners use to think while formulating actions relevant to the practice situation (Schon, 1983). Learning can be further enhanced by allowing time for reflection alongside an experienced social worker (Fook & Gardner, 2007).

Reflective practice is considered essential for students in both learning about the self and improving practice (Adamowich, Kumsa, Rego, Stoddart, & Vito, 2014; Foote, 2015). Reflective practice includes reflecting on an experience, examining the assumptions behind the experience, using theory to think about what the experience means and thinking about what might be done differently in the future (Davys & Beddoe, 2000; Ruch, 2002). While the primary development of reflective practice is within placement, students can learn the skill prior to placement with reflective exercises designed to encourage this thought process (Foote, 2015). These reflective exercises could be verbally debriefing role-plays or written assignments that elicit reflection on experience (Costello, 2016). Using reflective exercises repeatedly has been shown to improve reflective practice within social work students (Marlowe, Appleton, Chinnery, & Van Stratum, 2015).

Bridging the classroom to placement

Reflective practice helps students connect learning from the classroom to fieldwork placement (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). Preparing students for placement provides a link from classroom learning to learning on fieldwork placement. Many social work students find that once on fieldwork placement, the theories learnt in the classroom are difficult to relate to practice; the 'real' work (Hudson, 1997). This division between theory and practice is expressed within research as a criticism of social work academics providing education while removed from the reality of practice (Gursansky & Le Sueur, 2012). Some practitioners have the opinion that those who are teaching social work education in the classroom are unfamiliar with current concerns and pressures in social service workplaces (Barlow & Hall, 2007).

The learning that occurs during social work training needs to be related to experiences within fieldwork placement (Marlowe et al, 2015). Schon's (1983) metaphor of the marsh lands of practice as opposed to the high solid ground of academic thinking is a useful visual tool to explain the division and often oppositional relationship between learning in the classroom and learning in placement. Schon (1983) says:

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing “messes” incapable of technical solution (p. 42)

Reflective practice is a way of overcoming the on-going issue of separation between the classroom and placement (Mathews, Simpson, & Crawford, 2014). In order to connect classroom theory with experience social work students can be taught to learn methods of reflection (Marlowe et al., 2015). As Mathews et al (2014) says “reflection is the key social work skill that enables the practitioner to integrate knowledge, theory and values in their practice” (p. 36). The use of reflective practice to link concrete experience to academic theory uses both concepts in a complimentary way. In this way neither theory nor practice are considered superior to the other (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015).

Developing social work skills involves improving on skills students already have or developing new skills (Thompson, 2015b). Social work skills can be developed using reflective practice in conversation with other people in forums like supervision or independently through conscious reflection (Foote, 2015). Marlowe et al (2015) used thematic coding to analyse 15 students reflective exercises that were repeated across the course of their fieldwork placement. They found that some students ‘praxis’ or practice of skills improved along with their ability to reflect on practice situations. As these students were already on fieldwork placement however it would be difficult to isolate reflection practice as the cause of increased skill level as students are exposed to a number of learning methods during placement. Fook et al (2000) undertook a longitudinal study of social workers including students and their study supported the idea that reflective practice led to improved social work skills and confidence in practice.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking in students is their ability to investigate what underlies a concept and examine the way power operates in society (Gibbons & Gray, 2004).

Knowledge is not fixed but contextual which means definition of the same concept can vary. Critical thinking requires students to uncover any assumptions that they

or others may have in practice. For example forming an assessment of a client situation or writing an organisational policy are both situations that would benefit from critical thinking.

Reflective practice and critical thinking are closely aligned and many social work writers use the term critical reflection to describe the process of both practices (Thompson & Thompson, 2008). Critical thinking takes reflective practice one step further and encourages social work students and educators to reflect on power in any given situation (Fook & Gardner, 2007). The argument for joining these ways of thinking into one concept is that practicing reflection without critical thinking could produce unsafe practice (Thompson & Thompson, 2008). Critical thinking is a significant part of social work practice, however, there is merit in breaking down these concepts to make the understanding of them easier (Trevithick, 2012). Separating the terms allows analysis of the different traditions of the terms (Fook & Gardner, 2007). Postmodern theory provides the basis of critical thinking whereas reflective practice is influenced by studies on skill acquirement (Fook & Gardner, 2007).

Postmodernism advocates for the consideration of multiple perspectives rather than assuming that truth exists in just one perspective (Fook & Gardner, 2007). It is valuable to think about perspectives that may be invisible or marginalised within society's common held beliefs (Fook & Gardner, 2007). It is an unfortunate fact of New Zealand society that particular perspectives are frequently marginalised in the face of a dominant westernised, individualised narrative (O'Brien, 2016). For example, if a student embarks on a placement with people struggling with mental health they might focus on medical models of individual treatment and ignore the bigger picture of oppression and discrimination within society (Gambrill, 2013). Critical thinking provides a method for us to uncover assumptions and to ask ourselves; "Why do you have those expectations and where do they come from" (Fook, 2016, p. 38).

It is crucial for social work students to master critical thinking skills prior to going on placement particularly in a time when neoliberal ideas set the agenda for many

areas of social work (Morley, MacFarlane, & Ablett, 2014). While social work is not the only discipline to view critical thinking as important, social justice values are core to the profession (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, 2007; McCormick, Clark, & Raines, 2015). Critical thinking situates individual lives within notions of power including political, economical, cultural and social (Noble, 2001). Critical thinking is not necessarily an easy skill to learn. Learning styles and a reliance on rote learning can cause a barrier to learning this skill (Fook & Askeland, 2007; McCormick et al., 2015). Critical thinking needs to be continually practiced in order to be effective. Students who are able to critically analyse the power structures in one area of society may overlook other sources of oppression (McCormick et al., 2015).

Critical thinking is not only related to sources of oppression. Critical thinking is defined more broadly as examining the different elements that inform a social worker's thinking including assumptions (Gambrill, 2013). Like reflective practice, critical thinking relies on a thorough knowledge of self, our influences and background (Beddoe & Maidment, 2009; Fook, 2016; Maidment & Egan, 2016). Gaining the ability to use ourselves skilfully in social work involves knowing ourselves well, using reflective practice and being able to think critically about situations that arise (Maidment & Egan, 2016).

Development of skill

Social work students develop skills such as critical thinking and reflective practice over a period of time. The model of skill development created by Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1980) influenced the questions I asked participants in this research. Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1980) propose that there are several stages of development in skill acquisition ranging from novice to expert. At novice level learners apply the rules they have learned regardless of context. When they enter the next stage of development, the learner is able to take into account the context of the situation alongside the rules they learned at the novice stage. Dreyfus & Dreyfus (1980) claim that learning to take into account the context of the situation is only learnt through experience.

Applying Dreyfus and Dreyfus' (1980) model to social work education indicates that the rules of skills can be learnt in the classroom but the development of skill happens by practicing skills in different contexts (Daley, 1999; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980). Longitudinal research such as the work of Fook et al (2000) on the development of professional knowledge in social workers supports this idea. Fook, et al (2000) interviewed 30 trainee social workers using a semi-structured style over a period of five years. The findings showed a developmental progression in student and social work practice in the realms of knowledge, skill and reflexivity (Fook et al, 2000). Fook et al (2000) advocates for stages of development to be considered in social work skills education. Social work students and educators can be frustrated with the lack of skill in aspiring social workers. Stage models can help us understand that there is a process to skill acquisition and learning happens over time. (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006; Fook et al., 2000).

Competence approach to education

Competency-based education focuses on a student obtaining specified skills (Bogo et al., 2004). Many social work organisations, practitioners and educators consider that competencies are a way of measuring quality education (Social Workers Registration Board, 2017). This belief leads to researchers using time and energy to create the right tool to measure skill achievement in students (Cleak et al., 2015; Hay & O'Donoghue, 2009; Sewpaul & Jones, 2004; Tam & Coleman, 2009). Competency-based education infers that skills must be measurable and assessed using evidence-based evaluation methods (Bogo et al, 2004).

There is no consistent standard for measuring specific skills in education but researchers have attempted to create a measurement tool (Tam, Tigg, Boey & Kwok, 2013). Tam et al (2013) used a number of previously published quantitative studies in an attempt to come up with a set of statements that could measure the suitability of social workers for the profession. The final scale consisted of twenty-two statements that were divided into four categories: social consciousness, ethical suitability, personal suitability and practice suitability (Tam et al., 2013). In order to trace the origin of these statements, it is necessary to go

back to Tam and Coleman (2009) study on which Tam et al's (2013) research was based. In the study, Tam and Coleman (2009) used research from a number of sources to create their scale. This included Barlow and Coleman's (2003) study of Canadian Social Work programs, Gibbs's (1994) survey of United States social work programs, Koerin and Miller (1995) who analysed 81 social work programs in the United States, and Lafrance and Gray (2004) who spoke to 10 field educators from a Canadian University.

Reading Lafrance and Gray's (2004) research reveals that complex skills have been reduced in the statements within Tam et al's (2013) article. Lafrance and Gray (2004) used qualitative methods to ascertain field educator views on professional suitability. The use of reduced statements can strip the meaning from a concept that in the source article (Lafrance & Gray, 2004) took a page to discuss. Lafrance and Gray's (2004) participants said that if a social worker was aware of the reasons why they entered the profession this demonstrated their ability in reflective thinking. This concept is reduced to a student knowing the reasons why they chose to be a social worker in Tam et al's (2013) survey. Tam et al (2013) also remove statements that do not fit with the aforementioned four categories thereby taking social work principles like respect for "human diversity" out of the equation (p.470).

These researchers are not alone in attempting to establish a scale for measuring professional competency. Academics from many countries including New Zealand have created statements to measure social work professionals and social work students (Cleak et al, 2015; Hay & O'Donoghue, 2007; Sewpaul & Jones, 2007; Tam & Coleman, 2009). The use of competency frameworks for skill development has been debated by social work academics (Bogo et al, 2016; Cleak et al, 2015; Moriarty & Manthorpe, 2014; Trevithick, 2012). Proponents of competency approaches argue that measuring skills using instruments such as the SWRB competencies, will ensure that social work students demonstrate sufficient skills to practice with vulnerable people (Bogo et al., 2004). This argument claims that competency approaches are necessary to protect the public from social workers' mistakes (Bogo et al, 2004). Bogo et al (2004) state: "Competency-based

education is founded on the belief that professional practice can be defined in terms of techniques that, when applied to actual problems, will yield positive outcomes.” (p. 418). This formula attempts to create straightforward processes in a complex practice environment. While their argument makes things simpler for policy makers, registration bodies and educators, it does not necessarily lead to an accurate measure of the reality of practice (Pijl-Zieber, Barton, Konkin, Awosoga, & Caine, 2014).

Balancing certainty and complexity

The use of stage models, standards, competencies and capabilities needs to be balanced by taking into account social work education’s complex environment (Sewpaul & Jones, 2007). There is an increasing drive within current systems that encourage social workers to operate under a rational-technical approach (Hyslop, 2013). This approach relates to social work practice, social work education and social work research (Ruch, 2002). Social work skills analysed without reference to social work values are at risk of aligning with the neoliberal idea that social work is only useful if it serves the economy and can be proven to produce tangible outcomes (O’Brien, 2016).

The competency approach supports the notion that social work students can be measured using scientific tools and doesn’t take into account the complexity of supporting students to develop social work skills (Ruch, 2002). It is a comforting notion for students that they will avoid mistakes if they know the rules of practice (Fook et al., 2000; Gambrill, 2013). Social workers on every level, students, educators and practitioners learn with time that social work practice is not black and white it is a grey area in which the way forward is negotiated through mistakes and human fallibility (Lane, Munro, & Husemann, 2016).

Ruch (2002) provides a good example of resisting rule bound approaches in her paper on reflective practice. In her model Ruch (2002) juxtaposes two images, a set of triangles and a messy spiral image. The set of triangles illustrates a model of practice that attempts to establish clear rules or competencies (Ruch, 2002). This model appears to create safety and a clear path to follow however in doing so it

can also inhibit and mask the human element of practice (Ruch, 2002). Ruch's (2002) answer to this is to accept that practice is messy, and can lead to social work students being nervous about being on the right path. Ruch (2002) advocates the use of reflective practice to support a path through the messy spirals of practice.

Applying a prescriptive approach to social work skills education ignores the complexity of social work practice (Lane et al., 2016). Initially students need guidelines to establish a starting place for skill development (Costello, 2016). However, it is also important for students to remember that the skills they are learning take place in a context of uncertainty and following prescriptive rules is contrary to forming deep and meaningful relationships with clients (Maidment & Egan, 2016). A spiral staircase might be a better metaphor for skills development than a set of delineated stages to work through (Adams, 2007). While stage models, standards, competencies and capabilities are useful concepts in social work skills education, these concepts can encourage a belief that learning of skills is a linear and finite process (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006).

Learning occurs differently for each person and social work education needs to take into account that people's life experience (Fook et al, 2000). The use of skills within social work is enacted in a complex environment and is shaped "by practical, moral and political influences" (Hyslop, 2013, p. 233) Taking into account the context of skills is important when using rigid models to describe the acquirement of skill (Gray & Schubert, 2012). There is a balancing act between clear frameworks for practice and being adaptive to uncertainty in social work practice (Trevithick, 2012). It is this balancing act that makes clear the need for critically reflective practice as a foundation for social work skills prior to placement (Maidment & Egan, 2016).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined what is known about the way adults learn from experience and how this relates to social work skills. Reflective practice and critical thinking are two skills that are clearly necessary for preparing students to learn from their fieldwork placement. Studies that examine the way that professionals learn skills have helped to conceptualise the time involved in learning the social work craft. A common approach to skills education is using competence-based methods to measure skill. A balance between structured models and the complexity that exists in practice is important. There is a need to ensure that the messy human element is considered in models of skill development, including competency approaches. The ideas contained in this chapter influenced the formation of the research methods. The concept of skill development over time was used in the methodology for this research, with an acknowledgement that skill development is not necessarily linear (Fook et al., 2000). The following chapter discusses the methodology and outlines the research methods used for this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study. It is guided by constructivism which suggests that meaning is created by people, rather than being an outside entity that can be measured independently of context (Morrow, 2005). Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with field educators associated with University of Otago social work programme. Feminist and bicultural principles relevant to the interview process were applied. The data from the interviews was analysed to obtain the main skills that fieldworkers referred to in relation to students. A number of strategies were used in order to ensure that the research was trustworthy. These strategies included, thick description, member checking, peer conversations and analysis of researcher bias (Creswell, 2007). A limitation of this study is that there were eight participants, however, the relationships with the participants allowed for lengthy and interesting conversations during the interviews. Applied social worker skills in ethical decision-making were invoked when considering the variety of ethical issues emerging in the course of this research.

Constructing meaning

A basic tenet of constructivist research is that the researcher and the participants shape their understandings of reality between them (Morrow, 2005).

Constructivism acknowledges that there is more than one way of looking at any given subject and that there is no such thing as a single reality (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). The use of constructivist thought drew my attention to the context of the way data was collected and informed my intent to fully describe the environment surrounding the data, participants and myself as researcher (Lincoln et al., 2011). Constructivist theorists believe that meaning is created in relation to context (Lincoln et al, 2011). In this case the field educators' understanding of social work skills is created in relation to their experiences and the context in which they work. This same dynamic exists within my own understanding of how social work skills are created.

Professional social work relies on social workers being aware of their own worldviews in any practice setting including research (Fook, 2016). It is important therefore to make explicit my own particular experiences and how this affects the way I conceived skill development. Prior to undertaking this research my own understanding of skills and how social workers learn them came from my own experience. Additionally it is my understanding that I learnt skills through experiences before during and after training. I learnt skills prior to social work training through life experience and volunteer work. I learnt skills through my social work training and placement experiences. I then learnt skills while being employed as a social worker, through supervision and working alongside colleagues including those in other professions. Clients and their families provided feedback on my skills both explicitly in comments and implicitly through our relationships. As my career progressed and I was given responsibility for social work student education within my agency and supervision of a new graduate so too did my knowledge grow about how skills might be acquired by people new to the profession.

My experience influenced the questions asked in this study. My bias going into this research was the belief that social workers learn and understand skill development in a similar way that I did; from life experience, volunteer work, training, social work education, fieldwork placement, social work practice and then from teaching social work students through field education. When I began the interviews I quickly realised that I needed to be careful about how I influenced the flow of the interview. Similar to social work practice a deeper understanding of other people's stories is gained if the researcher limits suggestions of a particular viewpoint (Trevithick, 2012).

It is also important to consider my worldview as a Pākehā social worker working in a bicultural setting. As a Pākehā person my brain sometimes stops functioning when the subject of bicultural practice comes up (Eketone & Walker, 2015; Tolich, 2002). I want to 'do the right thing' but am often aware I may be getting it wrong and come with a worldview that is influenced strongly by my Scottish, Irish and English ancestors. This issue arose during the research when I recognised that I

would be interpreting tangata whenua opinion through my own lens. I was forced to ask myself whether this research was another form of colonisation. At one point in social work history and in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand a number of Māori felt that “by Māori, for Māori” was the only way to work with Māori (Mahuika, 2008; Walker, 2012; Walker, Eketone, & Gibbs, 2006, p. 333). As the conversation around bicultural practice has continued it is clear that social workers of all ethnicities need to be in a position where they can work with whoever walks through the door (Walker, 2012). It was not my intention to join the ranks of Pākehā researchers who as Mahuika (2008) puts it “have taken Māori knowledge and claimed it as their own, presuming to set themselves up as authorities on our culture yet discussing our lives and experiences in ways that are alien to our understanding.” (p. 2).

Western researchers have a history of using research to elicit participants’ knowledge as a tool of oppression, further overlaying western approaches over indigenous ways of being (Mahuika, 2008; Walker et al, 2006). Yet it would have felt wrong to exclude Māori participation in the research I set out to do. I agree with the positioning that research with Māori should be carried out by someone who is familiar with Kaupapa Māori approaches “by Māori, for Māori and with Māori” (Mahuika, 2008; Walker et al, 2006, p. 333). As I am Pākehā I am relying on my abilities of reflective practice, critical thinking, collaboration and on the wisdom of other researchers before me (Crawford, 2016; Eketone & Walker, 2015; Hudson, Milne, Reynolds, Russell, & Smith, 2010; Snow et al., 2015).

Acknowledging that the frameworks and approaches I am using in this research come from western ideology and therefore may not fit with indigenous ways of knowing (Crawford, 2016; Mahuika, 2008). Walker’s (2012) article is more aimed at Pākehā students rather than researchers, however, the advice given on how to approach working with Māori holds true. I considered myself as a “guest in Māori culture”, and not one who claims ownership over cultural knowledge (Walker, 2012, p. 69).

This research has benefited from the work of others in developing ethical guidelines for Pākehā researchers working with Māori (Hudson et al., 2010). The

University of Otago has a process in which all researchers are advised to consult with the Ngai Tahu Consultation Committee prior to beginning their research. I followed this process and was advised that the research was considered health research relevant to Māori. Two further pieces of advice were that it would be beneficial to collect ethnicity as part of the research and that the findings be presented to Māori health organisations. The guidelines Te Ara Riki published by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (Hudson et al, 2010) are useful for ascertaining if this research is aligned with Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The guidelines include a framework for assessing research against a set of principles:

The Māori ethics framework references four tikanga based principles (whakapapa (relationships), tika (research design), manaakitanga (cultural and social responsibility), and mana (justice and equity). (Hudson et al, 2010, p. 4)

Te Ara Tika is a valuable resource for researchers to assist adoption of Māori ethics. (Hudson et al, 2010). The principles detailed in Te Ara Tika are discussed in this chapter where relevant to the methodology.

Choosing a method

The method used in this study was designed to explore skills that students need prior to placement. From other studies, and my own experience, I decided that focusing on field educator experiences would be a one way of exploring this question (Fook et al., 2000; Hay & Brown, 2015; Hay et al., 2016). I chose to use a semi-structured interview format in a way that would allow for both inductive information and deductive information (Creswell, 2014). The interview was influenced by what was already known about the topic, as outlined in the previous chapters, and the research was guided by a specific question I hoped to answer (inductive). I also wanted to allow for new information to occur during the course of the interviews (deductive). In using semi-structured interviews I hoped to gain an understanding of participant ideas on skill development.

The participants were recruited from field educators who had provided support for University of Otago social work student(s) in the two years prior to the interview (2015-2016) and were not currently working with me as fieldwork

coordinator. The knowledge and practice of social work has elements that change rapidly and more recent experiences of fieldwork placement will more likely ascertain the skills students currently need. For example I was aware when starting the research that social media and smartphones were not so prevalent five years ago (Beddoe, 2016). This has changed in the last five years and these technologies have now become a part of everyday interactions in the lives of clients and social workers (Beddoe, 2016). I intended to interview field educators working in Non Government Organisations, the Statutory Sector and within District Health Boards as I felt that these different contexts could affect the skills that were considered significant (Lincoln et al, 2011).

Interviews

In October of 2016 I sent an email out to field educators that met the selection criteria. Ten responses were received and eight chose to go on to be interviewed as participants. No statutory social workers agreed to be interviewed. It is likely that a combination of agency constraints contributed to social workers in this sector being unwilling or unable to participate. During the period of time that I sent out the email to potential participants within Child Youth and Family major changes were happening within the organisation (2016). This organisation is now called Oranga Tamariki.

Participants were experienced social workers and field educators having been involved in practice for at least ten years. The participants' ethnically self-identified as Māori, Ngāti Kahangunu, Pākehā, New Zealand European, New Zealander, Scottish, Irish and British. They had all worked in a number of settings such as mental health, addictions, general social work, youth, children, family and care and protection. The organisations consisted of Non Government Organisation's, District Health Board's and Statutory agencies though no participant was currently employed by Child Youth and Family/Oranga Tamariki.

Semi-structured interviews allow for the participants' perceptions and stories to guide the research findings rather than being pre-determined by the researcher (Bryman, 2012). Stage models of skill development influenced the interview

questions. Participants were first asked about what skills they learnt during their own training, education and experience (see Appendix B). The questions were designed to elicit what skills the participants learnt that benefited their social work practice. The questions then moved on to asking their opinion on students they had worked with in fieldwork placement. It was intended information gathered about participants' experience of their own social work training would help answer the research question alongside a discussion about the fieldwork social work students. I was able to interview seven of the participants face-to-face and one through Skype. This method of interviewing was a deliberate strategy to increase the likelihood of interactive conversation (Crotty, 1998). Having a conversation in person increases the chances that the semi-structured interviews are comfortable for the participant and encourage a shared understanding about the participant's experience (Crotty, 1998). These conversations were taped using a voice recorder and then transcribed. All participants were sent their transcript for review and changes made when requested.

Te Ara Riki framework suggests that kaupapa Māori design is the ideal for research involving Māori. Hudson et al (2010) call this principle Tika. This research uses mainstream methods and therefore meets the minimum standard of research design in relation to the Te Ara Riki framework (Hudson et al, 2010). Ethnicity has been included in the write up of this research so that it may be of use in future research. Future research in this area would be strengthened by talking to Māori health providers and social workers face-to-face about the research to establish if this is something they are interested in. It would also be strengthened with face-to-face conversations about research design with Māori health providers. Pere and Barnes, (2009) suggest any research done with Māori needs to benefit the community as a primary aim. Cultural safety is paramount which means that careful attention needed to be given to ensuring that it was the participant's voice that was prioritised over my own (Pere & Barnes, 2009; Snow et al., 2015; Walker et al., 2006).

Feminist principles guiding the interview

In this research feminist principles guided the interview process. Attending to power imbalances between researcher and participants is a key feature of feminist research. These principles outlined by Beckman (2014) include consideration of power imbalances, expanding on questions asked, reflexivity, social relationships and the use of research results. During the interviews I did not stick rigidly to the prepared questions and expanded on my questions and comments depending on the nature of the conversation. An example of this was during one interview when I realised that the participant and I had a completely different definition of the concept we were discussing. We had a conversation where we agreed on terminology. This led to a deepening of the conversation after I had noticed that the use of particular terminology was causing a barrier. This relates to the use of social relationships within the interview (Beckman, 2014).

As previously discussed I was well acquainted with many of the participants. I consciously used relationship skills in order to facilitate conversation and reduce power dynamics. In this way I hoped that the participants would feel an active part of the interview process rather than passive subjects of the research process (Beckman, 2014). I felt that the conversation generated during the interviews showed that I largely achieved this goal of joint collaborators in conversation. I did this partly by being explicit about my collaborative intention at the beginning of the interview. The social workers in this study are activists in different ways within their social work practice and in their lives. Many of them were more interested in what difference this research would make rather than how the research would be documented. This is in keeping with feminist research principles. Making a difference through research is just as important as the way it is recorded (Beckman, 2014).

Analysis methods

The interview transcripts were analysed using guidelines set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis allowed an exploration of the conversation between researcher and participants. While some authors believe that thematic analysis is a tool rather than a method, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is a

“method in its own right” (p. 78). Braun and Clarke (2006) set out a six-part guide including familiarity with the data, code generation, and theme creation. Using this guide I began the analysis process by listening to the recordings and reading through the transcripts repeatedly. This process not only allowed a deeper understanding of the conversations but also meant that accuracy could be ensured (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process notes were taken on both the surface meaning of what was said and any underlying meaning that the participant might be trying to convey (semantic and latent)(Braun & Clarke, 2006). This meant that when it came to the next stage of “generating initial codes” there was a starting point (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88).

I coded manually using a word document to organise the themes. I then decided which themes related directly to the research question, and which themes were applicable to the area of social work skill more generally. Because of my familiarity with the topic and with the data I was able to organise the codes into themes and sub themes using a word document. At this point any codes unrelated to the topic of student social work skills were not considered. The themes were then organised using the relevant coded quotes. These themes were analysed further for alignment with the research question, relevance, cohesion and delineation through this process of quote selection (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Here I chose to let go of any themes that were not directly related to the research question. Refining and defining the themes was the final stage of analysis prior to writing the results and discussion. Two of the participants who wanted the opportunity to view their material prior to submission were sent their own themed quotes prior to writing up the results. Changes requested by participants were made prior to submission.

Establishing quality

Establishing a way of assessing the quality of qualitative research is not without controversy. Theorists on qualitative research disagree about the terminology and assessment methods that should be used to judge whether a piece of research is well constructed (Bryman, 2012; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Key strategies to establish the accuracy of qualitative research are outlined by Creswell (2007). He

recommends including a number of these strategies in qualitative research. The following strategies were utilised to establish rigour, make transparent the research process and allow for multiple opinions; peer conversations, reflection on researcher bias, member checking and thick description (Creswell, 2007). Relationships with participants also strengthened the research quality (Creswell, 2014).

Relationship with participants

Developing strong relationships with the participants is a key feature of research. In this study feminist and bicultural principles guided this process (Beckman, 2014; Hudson et al., 2010). It is also a strategy which qualitative researchers draw on to strengthen the interview method (Creswell, 2014). Comparing this research methodology with the Te Ara Riki framework showed that the minimum standard around relationships with participants was met through information sharing and consultation (Hudson et al., 2010). An element of good practice was included as I considered informed consent both written and orally during communication (Hudson, 2010). It is intended that the submission of this thesis is not the end to the research journey. Relationships will be on-going with individuals and the Dunedin social service community and these relationships will inform to what level the research develops beyond submission.

Manaakitanga as a concept within the Te Ara Riki framework is to do with the researcher ensuring that the cultural responsibility and respect are included in the method of research (Hudson et al., 2010). All participants chose the location of interview and some chose to use the University space. The Māori protocols that I followed were to do with making the participants feel welcome when they were coming to my office. Offering cups of tea and kai if appropriate was part of my way of showing manaakitanga. One protocol that I could have included was the use of karakia. The participants and I had a mutual respect for each other's views and practice. A true assessment of at which level I met this principle would need to include participants' opinion. For most of the participants I discussed their experience of the interview following the recorder being turned off however it is

doubtful if anyone of them would have felt comfortable giving me negative feedback on my interview style.

Prolonged engagement usually refers to the length of time a researcher spends in gathering data (Creswell, 2014). The length of time gathering data in this research was short however I have been involved in fieldwork education for a number of years. Some of the participants taking part in the research I have worked with for over twelve years. Due to the fact that I have been a social worker in Dunedin and then moved into working in a role that involves being an active part of field work in New Zealand I have had an opportunity to be an active member of the general area in which my participants are working; social work education in Aotearoa, New Zealand. My relationship with most of the participants had been built up overtime and will be an on-going relationship. The ethics of this process will be discussed later however the benefits of this relationship meant that power was easier to share, participants appeared to share their opinions freely and an understanding of how their point of view might differ from mine was more likely to emerge (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The way prolonged relationships are described in Creswell (2014) supports the benefit of my involvement with the participants for many years in their work settings. A researcher will have better findings if they spend time with participants in the participants' environment (Creswell, 2014).

Peer Conversations

Debriefing of the research process with a peer (my supervisor) is one way I was able to put my methodology under scrutiny. Due to the fact that I am a colleague within the department I relate to my supervisor as peer/colleague than student/teacher. Discussion of methodology and the thoughts that contributed to these decisions allowed for critique and reflection (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011). This approach is not without its dissenters. Angen (2000) argues that others looking at the research from a peer perspective do not have the same information as the researcher in order to make their judgement. An advantage in doing research with the support of a supervisor is that they have access to the same information as their supervisee.

Reflective practice

A thread running through this research is the importance within the social work realm of reflective practice (Mathews et al., 2014). As discussed in Chapter 3 reflective practice is important for social work students, practitioners, field educators, educators and researchers (Gambrill, 2013; Creswell and Miller, 2000). One example of this was my reflection on my communication style after transcribing my first interview. I realised that I was too enthusiastic within the interviews and was finishing the participant's sentences. As I transcribed the first interview prior to proceeding with the remaining interviews I was able to adapt my communication style to ensure that I was allowing participants to have their own voice and that meaning was not assumed. Within this research I intended right from the beginning to disclose any known "assumptions, beliefs and biases" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). It is of course likely that there were biases I was unaware of (Angen, 2000). In an effort to minimise these biases I used the other methods discussed here, peer conversations, member checking and prolonged engagement. While Angen (2000) argues that reflexive practice is used to seek objectivity in research, Creswell & Miller (2000) view this approach as more of a transparency approach that allows the reader to fully understand the processes both internal and external of the research.

Member checking

Member checking is the process in which the researcher takes elements of the research back to the participants to check they are on the right track (Angen, 2000). This approach was not used to its full extent in the research, however, aspects of member checking were used to obtain the opinions of the participants. All transcripts were sent back to the participants in order for them to make changes if they wished. Participants were offered the option of having the results relating to their interviews sent to them. Two participants had correspondence with me regarding the interview transcripts, findings and results. Six participants had correspondence with me only on the transcripts. I was aware prior to embarking on this strategy that participants had busy lives and may not have the time to engage in on-going correspondence regarding the research findings. Member checking was used to shape a joint understanding of skill development;

both in areas that were agreed upon, and any areas in which practitioners disagreed on (Barusch et al., 2011).

Thick description

The importance of representing the quotes within the context that they were spoken became apparent to me when selecting the quotes to use (Creswell, 2007). I immediately saw that I could misrepresent what was said by removing the context in which the words were spoken. In order to ensure context was taken into account I left the quotes with surrounding circumstances including tone and interviewers questioning until the results were written. The quotes are represented in as much detail as possible so that the context in which the words were spoken is represented (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Strengths and Limitations

Many of strengths and limitations of this study are linked to, and derive from the same factors, such as who was involved, where they were they located and how the research took place. The fact that I am a social worker working within the community that I'm studying meant that I had a good connection with the participants. The qualities of the participants themselves also provided strength to the study. The participants were experienced articulate members of the social work profession who had been involved in fieldwork education for many years. This meant that, in terms of power dynamics I was often not the most experienced practitioner in the room and could genuinely show that I wanted to learn from the participant's experience.

The limitations of the study are based on the fact that this research involved a small number of field educator participants in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand connected to a specific educational institution. There was a risk that because I am an insider within the social work community that it would be assumed that we shared the same definitions of terms. As already discussed the term 'reflective practice' can be used in a number of different ways. I attempted to allow for differing definitions in the interviews by asking the participant to elaborate on any terms that had several different meanings.

My ethnicity as a Pākehā woman coming from a middle class background could be seen to limit my interpretation of conversations with social workers that came from a different perspective. I was acutely conscious of the potential to silence the voice of participants rather than ensuring that their views were heard (Beckman, 2014). As it is a small study and only one participant came from outside of Dunedin it could be argued that the findings could not be applied to other locations. I have provided context within this research to allow the reader to make their own judgements about the transferability of the findings (Bryman, 2016). The lack of diversity amongst participants in terms of ethnicity is also another critique and limitation of this study.

Te Ara Riki framework includes guidelines to ensure that equity and justice is maintained for Māori. This is called the principle of Mana (Hudson et al., 2010). The methodology meets only the minimum standard of the Te Ara Riki framework (Mana Tangata) as it has not involved equally sharing power with the Māori community from the outset. It is intended that conversations and presentations regarding the research findings will be offered to Māori health organisations particularly in Dunedin but also offered further afield in Southland. Whether this research will eventually be able to meet good practice standards remains to be seen and will rely on whakapapa and whanaungatanga (connections and relationships). The judgement on how relevant this research is for mana whenua is not mine to make, however, the findings will be presented to the Ngai Tahu Consultation Committee in order for them to have access to the findings.

The study would have been strengthened if it included student and client opinion. However, I want to emphasise that I was extremely grateful for the generosity of the participants in sharing their opinions and through their willingness to participant. There was some diversity of ethnicity, gender and practice background within the participants. The participants in this study have had a mixture of first and second placement students. Some of the participants in the study had only worked with second placement students. The fact that I did not distinguish in the interviews between the skills needed for placement one and placement two could be considered a limitation.

Ethical Issues

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and its limits were considered prior to undertaking this research. I was aware prior to undertaking this research that an assurance to the participants that their identity would be protected would be unrealistic. The participants come from a small sample group and New Zealand is a small, interconnected place. Prior to each interview I outlined confidentiality and its limits in writing and verbally. All of the participants indicated that they were aware that readers of this thesis might be able to identify them. Many of the participants indicated that they did not feel the need for anonymity. Those that did prefer to remain anonymous were aware of the risk of being identified and discussed this issue with me. Together we worked out an individual strategy in order to give them full control over the content that was outlined in the research.

Chambers (2015) explores the fact that by giving control of information to participants the research can be limited in the depth that it can go to. In other words controversial findings have to be either masked or left out due to participants concerns around confidentiality. I considered the participant's discussions with me similar to the relationship I would have as a social worker listening to client stories. They are only my stories to tell if I have informed consent to tell them. My commitment to the participants was to protect their identity by storing their data in a secure environment, giving codenames and gaining permission for any information I intended to publish that may reveal their identity.

Conflict of interest

In the process of applying for ethical approval I identified that I had multiple relationships with most of the participants. This included as colleague, fieldwork coordinator, peer, and friend. The main conflict of interest I identified from these relationships was if I was currently working as a fieldwork coordinator for the participant and a student. I removed this as a possibility by not recruiting participants who I was currently working with as fieldwork coordinator. I made this clear in the information sheet. However, in the course of the research one of

the field educators began working with a social work student. This was after the interview process but during the write up when I was still consulting with participants. Working as a social worker within the Dunedin community has given me skills at working with the inevitable cross over of relationships that occur. When I met a participant in another setting (and I met all of them in various settings in the year after the research took place) I would not refer to their role as research participant unless they chose to bring it into the conversation.

Student information

All field educators referred to specific student examples in the conversations we had. While names were not used it was possible for me to determine who the student was from the fact that I had been involved either directly or in a peripheral way. No quotes were used that identified individual students.

Informed consent

After I had completed the interviews and while writing up the research I discovered a discrepancy between the ethics application and the information sheet. In the ethics application I indicated that I would let participants know the reason why I was collecting personal information (ethnicity and general work place) and how this would be used within the research. This was mistakenly omitted from the information sheet (see Appendix A). In the interviews I discussed with participants why I was gathering work place information and how this would be used but I did not discuss ethnicity. I went back to the participants on this issue and asked if they would agree to me using ethnicity to describe the group of participants. For some of them this was a face-to-face conversation and for others it was an email conversation. All agreed apart from one whom did not reply. This participant's ethnicity has not been included in the description.

In conclusion the qualitative methodology used in this research was influenced by constructivism. Reflection on my own worldview was an important part of the methodology. Consideration of power dynamics relating to gender, class and ethnicity were taken into consideration. The method consisted of eight semi-structured interviews held with social workers that act as field educators for

University of Otago Students. The questions were designed to explore the field educators' experiences of skill development both in their own practice and in their fieldwork students. The interviews were guided by feminist principles and Te Ara Riki framework. While there were some limitations to the research due to the small size, a number of strategies were put in place in order to strengthen the methodology. Ethical issues such as confidentiality and omission of information were addressed as they arose. In the following chapters the findings from the participant interviews will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Findings

Hinengaro

Introduction

The following two chapters discuss the findings of the research. They focus on the skills students need prior to placement as identified by the participants. The findings are presented based on themes, supported by participants' words. The first findings chapter describes skills related to use of the mind (Hinengaro). Specifically this chapter offers findings related to self-awareness, critical thinking, communication, bicultural practice, cultural skill, ethics and application of theory.

Self awareness

Participants used the term self-awareness interchangeably with the terms self-knowledge and self-reflection. It was frequently related in conversation to critical thinking and reflective practice generally. The emphasis on this skill within the participants' experience is echoed in academic writing about skills. Trevithick (2012) describes self-awareness as the ability to use self-knowledge in interactions with people. All of the participants referred to the importance of students being able to uncover their own judgements, recognise what was informing that judgement and be open to other ways of seeing. In the conversation about students' worldview Beth said, "the skill is the ability to identify your values and judgements...to be cognisant of what you are doing". Similarly Jenny hoped that students had some "ability to analyse information" and an ability to identify the thinking that informed their judgements.

I would hope they come with...understanding 'Ok, I'm making a judgement here and that's informed by ... their own personal opinion, that they can actually identify that then they can try and separate from that. (Jenny)

The view that self-awareness is important is a view that is supported by psychodynamic theory (Payne, 2014). During the conversation participants mentioned several psychodynamic ideas including attachment, transference and

transactional analysis. These theories indicate that students will unwittingly project their own relationship experiences onto other relationships unless they have some degree of self knowledge and have reflected on their past relationships particularly with their family of origin (Payne, 2014). The exploration of this would be a useful one for further research. As previously discussed students are coming into the training at a younger age and are often at a very formative stage regarding their self-awareness. These students can struggle with placement when they come up against new, sometimes shocking experiences and do not have the tools to explore their own reactions to these experiences.

As with all social work skills developing knowledge of self can last the lifetime of a social worker (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). As a starting point prior to placement, students benefit from beginning to consider how their own histories, values and assumptions impact on the way that they relate to other people (Mathews et al, 2014). In order to use the self in a conscious way social workers need to develop their self-awareness and examine who they are, how they think and why they act how they do (Marlowe et al., 2015). As Thompson (2015b) points out, if the self is the main tool of social work, then knowing who we are, and how we work will ensure that we are going to be more skilled in the use of ourselves. Most participants in this study connected student's ability to be aware of their own values to their ability to be self-reflective. Beth and Claudia spoke about this in relation to their own training:

The most important stuff was around that self-reflection. Yeah, I really think that that was an important piece for me. Just being able to kind of acknowledge where I sit in relation to my views about people. And I think it really kind of helps you think about your own judgements and things you take into your practise subconsciously. (Beth)

Having an understanding of your own value base and how that affects some of the ethical decisions that we make. I think that's what I mean about knowledge of self as well is having some understanding about your values and your beliefs and how that impacts then on the work that you're doing. (Claudia)

Other participants felt they were not well equipped with the skill of self-reflection as a student heading into placement. As Alex says:

What I didn't feel well equipped with especially in the first placement was self-reflection. Cause the main difficulties I had in that placement were with my own beliefs, values and expectations and it took almost to the end of that placement to be able to figure out how that was impacting work with them.(Alex)

Participants felt that the process of self-reflection was something that could be taught prior to placement. However the ability to be insightful was something that relied on student's willingness to be inward looking.

(Self reflection)... can be taught. I've learnt it along through the course of my practice. If I'm feeling something towards a person or a situation then now I will stop and think about what is really going on here. Rather than attributing the feeling I'm having to the person who I'm having it about. So I think its something that can be taught the process of stopping, thinking look you know... to be honest with themselves. Maybe that part of it can't be taught. You can't actually make somebody honestly evaluate a situation. (Alex)

I don't know if you can teach people to be really insightful, but you can teach them to ask questions maybe, to sort of challenge their own assumptions. So that that becomes practise, when they're out. (Beth)

A related skill to self-reflection is students' self-awareness particularly in relation to their own personal issues. Field educators participating in this research echo findings from other studies that emphasise the benefits of exploring personal history in social work education (Barlow & Hall, 2007). In Barlow & Hall's (2007) research 35 students and 35 field educators were interviewed regarding placement experiences. Field educators indicated that students would benefit from acknowledging how their personal histories affected their work (Barlow & Hall, 2007). Interestingly some students within Barlow and Hall's (2007) research did not recognise self-knowledge as an important factor and perceived that field educators were impinging on their personal lives. Students may not feel that it is important, however, social workers including academics and field educators consider that knowledge of self including personal history is an important aspect of practice (Ruch, 2002; Barlow & Hall, 2007). Participants in this study indicated that self-reflection required an ability to be vulnerable and to be prepared to openly question their own beliefs and actions. Claudia and Beth acknowledged

that this was not a skill that students always brought with them and Beth indicated that some social workers never fully developed this skill.

I think students sometimes struggle with that, is having a good knowledge about themselves and what they bring in to a conversation. ...sharing information about themselves, sometimes. When it's appropriate and when not. Yeah, just a really clear understanding of what you're bringing in to the conversation. (Claudia)

I think an ability to be reflective, is definitely a skill ... and I think sometimes students get caught up in not wanting to reveal themselves, which is a shame. I think that's a real lost opportunity. (Beth)

It depends on how good that person is reflecting on the work that they've done... I think that some people are just so unaware (and) will never get a good knowledge about themselves and the impact that they have. I'm not sure that that always comes. (Claudia)

Being prepared to ask for help was related to being prepared to be vulnerable. Jenny identified that recognising the limits of their own knowledge was an important skill for students to learn:

You end up pulling yourself into the ground if you try and be everything to everyone. And so I think that's an important skill, is knowing your limits. And being able to know that you don't have to be perfect, you just need to ask for help if you need some help or to say 'I'm not sure about this' ... It doesn't mean that you're not good enough or you can't be a social worker, you need to ask somebody for some help or you need a bit of guidance or you say we can talk about this. It's actually really good to do that. And sometimes that's not easy for people to do. (Jenny)

Students on placement can find it difficult to share their vulnerability with field educators (Barlow & Hall, 2007). Students are acutely aware that the field educator has power to influence the outcome of the placement. This can be a barrier to wanting to show any weaknesses including personal issues (Barlow & Hall, 2007). Claudia noticed that the reluctance to be vulnerable also extended to conversations in supervision. Claudia said "coming from an academic environment, students really struggle to have that vulnerability in supervision". Claudia put this reluctance down to the fact that students were used to the assessment environment of the university setting.

I've had students that have been extremely reflective, have understood the need to be really open and honest in supervision and share not only the good stuff but the stuff they didn't do so well. I've had students that are quite reserved about that, they'll only tell you the things that they did so well and struggle to share the things that they could have done differently. Almost feeling like, supervision's not an assessment process, supervision is a reflective process. Students sometimes struggle with moving from you know being in an academic environment where you are being assessed, understanding what supervision is, and how it benefits them. (Claudia)

There was a general consensus that ignoring personal issues would have a negative impact on social work practice.

So if I'm hiding off or blocking off for myself and not dealing with certain things, it's just going to be bad news when it gets to that practice. Probably not in the first year, maybe not in the second year but definitely in the third year. There's only so long you can push it out. Or try and hold in, whatever's going on there personally. (Fiona)

Belinda used the example of her own training to indicate that self-awareness could be developed in the classroom. As discussed in chapter 3 students can learn self-awareness through reflective exercises (Foote, 2015; Grant et al., 2014; Marlowe et al., 2015). Belinda mentioned how her own training equipped her to be self-aware and her sense that it was important to teach this prior to placement.

I think what I feel I got from the academic stuff was that real insight into what I'm bringing personally to the role. I think that that gets practised in the placement, but that really needs to be brought to the front in the classroom. And I think that brings into question our assumptions about how we think certain situations have arisen. Like you know, someone's you know a scenario like a child's been abused at home. What do we think about that? And what assumptions or opinions do we have? And I think they're probably quite different once we understand more about our self and our own experiences. In addition to all the other kind of society stuff that's going on there, but I think in the classroom that real self-knowledge needs to be – people need to be encouraged to really access that. I don't know if you can teach people to be really insightful, but you can teach them to ask questions maybe, to sort of challenge their own assumptions. So that that becomes practice, when they're out. Then they're like oh why do I think that. So I think that's something that I remember

thinking in my training, like wow that was enlightening. It might not have come up to me had I not done that and when I think about my work prior, I don't think I was really cognisant of some of those assumptions. (Belinda)

Encouragingly Belinda had seen evidence of social work students coming to placement already equipped with the skills of self-reflection. She also indicated that students were aware that reflective practice was a continual process in the course of placement.

The students have been really amazing. You know they're really high quality and I think their ability to self-reflect really comes through and that's obviously something that they really worked on. And expect to do. And I think that's testament to what's being taught. So it just goes to show what you can teach, these kind of soft skills I guess they are, do translate into practise. They're really reflective people that exist out there that have come out of here so that's been really quite cool and I don't think that when I was training there was – there was definitely emphasis on self-knowledge but this constant self-reflection I'm not sure – I don't recall that being – maybe that was a one off deal. I've self-reflected and now I'm going to be a social worker. But these guys are really in the practice itself of reflection. (Belinda)

Social work placement can be emotionally demanding on students and attention to emotional wellbeing is important for learning (Grant & Kinman, 2014; Ikebuchi & Rasmussen, 2014). While students may not experience the stress of practice until embarking on placement they can be prepared for this with emphasis on the importance of using emotions to both support the work and support themselves in placement (Ikebuchi & Rasmussen, 2014). This relates to the previous conversation about vulnerability. Students can be compromised in their ability to identify the importance of their own feelings if social work educators do not attune themselves to this aspect of the student (Ikebuchi & Rasmussen, 2014). Isla, Helen and Fiona all discussed the importance of learning self-care. Isla used the analogy of first aid:

It's like First Aid. If you don't put your own mask on, you can't help anyone in an emergency on a plane or if you don't get out of harm's way when you are trying to rescue someone, you could get run over therefore you can't save anyone else can you? Stop!

Assess! Proceed. I often use First Aid Practice as an analogy in the work. (Isla)

This use of the oxygen mask as analogy is the same as that used by a field educator in a Canadian study (Grant et al., 2015). The importance of students learning to take care of their own wellbeing before helping others was something that participants felt was important. Helen and Fiona referred to strategies that could support self-care during placement and practice. This echoes advice given by social work academics for students to think ahead of placement how they might manage the stresses of placement and the balance of study, life and work (Beddoe & Maidment, 2009; Maidment, 2013; Mathews et al, 2014). Fiona suggests:

That you have a good solid base... things like having your own sense of identity and connection with family, your own other hobbies that you like to do ... That you take holidays, all those sorts of things. (Fiona)

The use of strategies such as mindfulness have been increasingly used in the training of helping professionals (Gockel, Burton, James, & Bryer, 2013). Helen thought that these ways of managing emotions could be learnt early in student training.

I think learning what it is quite early on that you can do to calm yourself in something stressful, cause social work can be really stressful. So any kind of mindfulness stuff, even beginning to learn how to calm yourself by breathing, or by taking a moment, or by pausing and not being reactive. (Helen)

Practitioners discussed self-awareness as the building block to a number of skills including reflective thinking, critical thinking, communication, cross-cultural practice, use of supervision and self-care. This finding is consistent with other research such as Trevithick (2012), Cleak and Wilson (2013), Costello, (2016), Fook (2016), and Gordon and Dunworth (2017). All of these researchers indicate that self-awareness is the building block for other skills. The use of reflective assignments that encourage the exploration of students' worldview provides preparation for placement (Costello, 2016; Fook, 2016). These assignments are designed to teach the skills of self-awareness, reflective practice and critical

thinking in the one process (Marlowe et al, 2015). Critical thinking is related to self-awareness but comes from a different theoretical background.

Critical thinking

A number of participants felt that critical thinking was a crucial skill for students to bring into placement. As discussed in Chapter 3, critical thinking comes from postmodern thought and uses an analysis of power and multiple viewpoints to illuminate particular situations (Fook, 2016). The participants' perspective on the importance of critically analysing the impact of government policy and legislation is relevant to the ecosystems perspective discussed in the introduction (Healy, 2014; Zuchowski et al., 2014). The ecosystems perspective is strengthened though critical analysis of influence and power (Payne, 2014). Field educators in this study indicate that observing the influence of organisational (mesosystem) and government (macrosystem) on microsystems is essential for students. Alongside this they hope that students will also critically analysis these influences. Fiona expressed the opinion that students needed to be de-programmed from neoliberal theories that they receive through their secondary education.

For them is needing to have ... a revolution in thinking in like 'how does the world come to be the way it is', so that sense of history, that sense of self, that sense of critique, ability to critique and understand why others might see them in positions of privilege. (Fiona)

Participants named the ability to critically think about government legislation and organisational policy as a significant skill learnt in their training. Fiona and Beth had conversations with students in placement to explore how legislation and policy affected clients and constrained social work practice. When Elaine was asked what was useful in her own training she said, "I think analysis of policy, and also being able to link that governmental policy to everyday life in terms of how that affects people." Beth indicated that being aware of wider issues was an important part of social work:

There's no point trying to come in and do stuff without understanding the factors at play, actually having a bigger play than you probably hope or wish they were (laughs). That

awareness of the role of government, the role of funding, all of that (Beth)

There's a lot of structures placed around the social work team that are really inflexible. So being able to kind of think about why we're here and why we're doing this, and what's in – and that's about the policy and the institutional stuff. (Beth)

Critical thinking prompts an awareness of social justice issues. A number of participants referred to social justice principles as an important part of training prior to placement. Helen talked about “notions of social justice and anti-oppression, anti-discrimination ... the political nature of social work, which wasn't in any of my other domains.” In referring to “other domains” Helen was indicating that this was not something she learnt from previous life experience prior to training. Elaine came to her social justice awareness differently and began to become politicised through life experience.

I worked in a really poor town where there was really high unemployment and also the benefit cuts came in that year. 90 – I think it was 1990, 91 perhaps. And working in a dairy in quite a poor part of town and just seeing the effect of that on people's poverty, so I guess I became a little bit more socially conscious that year before going (to University). (Elaine)

Students can be encouraged within the classroom to recognise the neoliberal discourses that shape government policy (Beddoe & Keddell, 2016). The use of critical thinking makes it more likely that social work students will keep their eyes open for sources of oppression and not unwittingly collude with the neoliberal narrative (Gambrill, 2013).

Communication

Every participant talked about communication skills. This skill was framed as a foundational skill in terms of being an obvious or basic skill of social work. There is agreement amongst academics and practitioners on the importance of communication skills in social work (Richards et al., 2005). The communication skills discussed by participants were active listening including paraphrasing and paying attention to non-verbal communication.

Active listening, and you know the paraphrasing, the letting someone know that you're hearing them which I think is actually essential in social work. You need to be a good listener and you need to be able to feed back what you heard. (Elaine)

Elaine indicated that students should come with more specific skills on group work and family work. However, the majority discussed communication skills more broadly. Communication skills were mentioned alongside the ability to build relationships with people. Relationships are formed from the outset by intentionally establishing rapport and using communication skills.

There are skills I learnt which I appreciated. Knowing there are things in Māori traditional practices that is encompassing of all people. These treasures have assisted me right from the beginning in my work e.g karakia, whakawhanaungatanga (mihimihi / greeting and who I am) to begin the processes of engagement and honour people, no matter who they are. (Isla)

In relation to students skills of greeting people and interacting with them Elaine said:

I think those are basic social skills and enable people to feel comfortable. And that's really important in any social work – that's what we're there for first and foremost is having that engagement so you can do the work. Otherwise there's no platform to jump off (Elaine)

Relationship building skills was considered a key skill for social work students. Participants agreed that students should begin developing these skills through the use of role-plays. The opinion of the participants in this study regarding the importance of relationship skills is corroborated in other research (Tompsett et al., 2017; Trevithick, 2012; Trevithick et al., 2004). Courage to operate from a position of valuing communication skills within social work is an issue in a time when the pressure is to spend less time with clients and communities (Gambrill, 2013; Richards et al, 2005). Despite this the opinion of these field educators aligns with previous research. Communication skills are still a core skill of social work practice (Richards et al, 2005).

iBicultural Practice

Five of the participants naturally began talking about bicultural practice when they were referring to their own training and their experiences within it. For both Māori and Pākehā participants there was some discussion about emotions in relation to bicultural education and bicultural conversations. The topic of biculturalism raises a number of strong emotions in both Māori and Pākehā (Crawford, 2016; Hotere-Barnes, 2015; Sue, 2013). Participants in this study spoke about fear, anger, and shame. Crawford (2016) suggests that being uncomfortable particularly for Pākehā in the process of learning bicultural practice is a part of decolonisation process. A number of authors who discuss bicultural practice also discuss the variety of emotions that come with cross-cultural conversations (Sue, 2013; Torrie et al., 2015). Isla talks about being whakama (shamed or embarrassed) when learning Te Reo with a non-Māori teacher.

When we first started the social work programme we were required to learn basic Te Reo 101. We did the Te Reo course as a whanau and our koro also attended who was fluent in the Reo. He did the course because he needed certificates to teach Reo at a Whare Wananga. He spoke to the teacher fluently in Te Reo Maori. At times she didn't understand him. He failed the paper. I was unable to string sentences together and I passed.
(Isla)

Sue (2013) outlines some experiences of black American students and teachers within the academic setting. She discusses how students of colour are continually experiencing “micro aggressions” on the basis of ethnicity. These are often visible and upsetting to people of colour. Conversely white students are sometimes oblivious to the impact of stereotypes on black people (Sue, 2013). Isla talked about the experience of hearing Māori described in negative ways and how she sometimes felt alienated in relation to hearing these conversations. Sometimes Isla would address these negative stereotypes directly.

In those days there was a huge running down of Māori things and I would go 'look here!'. (Isla)

Sue (2013) reports that people of colour have a difficult decision to make when faced with conversations where their culture is denigrated. First they have to decide whether to stay silent or choose a way to express themselves. Either way strong emotion can be involved of anger and/or guilt at not being able to stand up for their people (Sue, 2013). This could explain experiences of some of the participants during social work education. Some experienced bicultural education as alienating due to strong emotions expressed by Māori educators.

In our training we also found it really off putting in that – I guess it was back in the 90s -and to be very blaming, very angry, actually screaming at the class, you did this to my people and you're gonna be the ones working with them and you better get it right. Swearing at us even. And so that kind of approach where we didn't feel like we were walking alongside and didn't feel like we were welcome to be doing that work. (Elaine)

Entrenchment of cultural divides can occur when a learning environment does not allow freedom of expression (Sue, 2013). Beth describes how a student she worked with felt unable to discuss uncertainties within bicultural training. Beth related this to her own experience and talked about her hope that cultural conversations could be more open. Again Beth talks about the emotions that are involved in conversations about culture.

I would have loved that to have been the case when I was training to be like, you know for the lecturer to have been like really is that how you feel. Let's talk about that. (Beth)

Beth and Alex had questions regarding the alignment of bicultural practice within a multi-cultural social work environment:

One of the questions that I had was how do we think about biculturalism in such a multicultural environment, so I think that was something that yeah. There's still some tension for me around, how that gets taught and how we make sense of that. (Beth)

Isla noticed that processes within organisations and institutions were “slipping” back to mono cultural ways of doing things having been more progressive in earlier years. The Māori worldview and way of practicing has continued to be neglected in social work agencies and education (Hollis-English, 2012; Tsuruda &

Shepherd, 2016; Walsh-Tapiata, 2004). Mono-cultural views continue to exist within the profession and within the institutions that we work and it is part of the professional ethics to ensure that this is challenged at any opportunity (ANZASW). The ecosystems perspective provides a way of being able to see how monocultural policies at government level and monocultural practices at organisational level can affect both the individuals working in those systems and the individuals being affected by those systems (Healy, 2014; Waldegrave, 2009). This is the point where the ecosystems perspective needs to be supported by intervention strategies in order to improve bicultural practice throughout the ecosystem (Healy, 2014).

Back then we had Māori models of practice, and Taha Māori traditions as part of an orientation for new Māori workers and done as a team. That wasn't seen as important and Māori workers again have been isolated out. It seems they are the afterthought. Tikanga only when it suits. (Isla)

Most participants referred to the education within their training as useful and necessary. Isla, Fiona and Claudia spoke about valuing bicultural training when it created a way to support a cultural journey:

Coming from a small town ...coming to university and learning about bicultural practise was a big change for me ... Being able to come to university and start engaging in those conversations was incredibly valuable. (Claudia)

We were really lucky, I had Tahu Potiki who did our sort of cultural training, and ... Merania Katanai. Yeah so Merania did the second year. So because I got to do it over two years, I got a great double dose of amazing culture and Moana Jackson was down this way for a whole lot of time during that period, ... So there was a lot of richness to what we had in our particular bit. So yeah, I felt afterwards I didn't realise how lucky at the time, it felt quite special at the time – it really was. (Fiona)

Those that had a positive experience of bicultural education talked about acceptance, welcoming and working alongside. There was mention in participants' discussion that Māori and non-Māori working alongside and learning from each other was a way to overcome cultural barriers and reduce monocultural ways of practicing. As Isla put it: " actually getting people alongside of you

and seeing some good things about Taha Māori”. Those that discussed experiences of effective and enjoyable bicultural education spoke about training held outside the University space. Isla referred to the educational spaces created by Māori as “breaking down barriers”. Education spaces designed to support Māori learners help non-Māori and Māori to be educated about colonisation and Te Ao Māori in non-threatening ways (Walker, 2012). This approach to bicultural education fits with the views of Māori writers such as Walker (2012) and Edwards (2013) that learning social work in spaces where Tikanga Māori is paramount ensures that the learning is meaningful. For Pākehā working outside their cultural comfort zone involves a process of “letting go and being comfortable with discomfort” (Hotere-Barnes, 2015 p. 9). For Pākehā to continue to engage in ways of biculturalism we need to acknowledge uncomfortable feelings and accept them as part of the process (Crawford, 2016; Jones, 2012).

There is no one way that Pākehā are asked to show bicultural practice and no checklist to work from (Jones, 2012). This lack of framework can be confusing for Pākehā who are often looking for guidance on how to act on what they learn about biculturalism (Crawford, 2016). This can be particularly difficult for students if we take into account the fact that they are looking for rules when first embarking on placement (Fook, 2000). Jones (2012) argues that the idea that Pākehā should expect a rulebook to create relationships between Māori and Pākehā is a western construct. Learning from a book on how to be bicultural is not enough; we also need to be prepared to navigate the path of listening and learning in company with Māori (Crawford, 2016).

Cross-cultural skill

Field educators in this study discussed working across different cultures. They agreed with other studies on how cross-cultural skill could be learnt and taught (Jani, Osteen, & Shipe, 2016). The theme of cross-cultural skills arose from discussion about the participants own training and broader conversations about the need for this to be taught prior to placement. Beth and Claudia emphasised that they felt cultural skills are an important skill for social work students:

The cultural stuff I think is really important as well. New Zealand is a unique thing in that sense and we have a real opportunity I think to reflect on our cultural stuff, so that needs to be taught definitely. (Beth)

Understanding the different ways of engaging people ...with regard to kind of any kind of cultural difference, whether that be with families, anything really of difference. And in learning some of those skills about engaging and being respectful of the difference and just find your way through that. (Claudia)

New Zealand society is becoming increasingly diverse both through immigration and childbirth rates (Eketone, 2015). Eketone, (2015) argues that bicultural ways of working and cross-cultural practice “are not mutually exclusive” (p. 42). Cross-cultural skill is important to develop in social work students as they must be prepared to work with a wide range of cultures (Mlcek, 2014).

And I’d say nowadays there’s even more importance around things particularly with Dunedin. In terms of Pasifika communities and with the refugee settlers coming in, that sort of thing. ... you can’t know everything but you can have the right attitudes. (Fiona)

Beth related multi cultural practice to bicultural practice by talking of bicultural practice as a foundation. This is used by other studies as a way to view the relationship between bicultural and multi-cultural (Mlcek, 2014). Beth and Fiona questioned how social work students might learn the skills to communicate across all cultures:

I mentioned earlier that sort of multicultural thing and that’s something that I feel is important. And it’s just the reality of our world. So the bicultural being in my view like the basis and the foundation in which we all work, but the how do we then spread that out to – are we expected to be competent across all –how do we deal with that? And how do we talk about the third culture or – and how do we be competent with that? (Beth)

And so culturally, no I didn’t know how to communicate well with everybody, so you know there’s things around knowing – well if I don’t know, how do I know I don’t know? (laughs). And then how do I find out? (Fiona)

Participants felt that cross-cultural skill could be taught in study, but also needed to be developed by experience with different cultures. This experience might

occur before, during or after social work training. Experiential learning is an important part of developing strategies and techniques to work with diverse cultures (Jani et al., 2016). There is a limit to the amount we can learn about other cultures simply from self-reflection and assignment work (Mlcek, 2014). A large part of learning about other cultures is in the experience of interacting with people who are different from us. This learning is what we get through life experience including practice experience. Fiona discussed the benefit of experience prior to training: "I grew up in a household where we had people coming from overseas every year. So I had an idea that my way was not the only way in the world. So that was an advantage". Claudia's agreed with the importance of cross-cultural experience while conversely coming from the perspective of minimal exposure to different cultures.

If you've only interacted with a particular group of people then you're not going to be able to find those skills until you get to placement, and have an opportunity to work with different groups of people (Claudia)

While experiential learning is essential to cross-cultural practice it is also important to have a foundation of the other skills discussed earlier in this chapter including self-reflection, openness and critical thinking (Sue, Rivera, Capodilupo, Lin, & Torino, 2010). The importance of reflective practice and critical thinking re-surfaces in research findings in this study to do with cross-cultural relationships. This finding supports previous research with social work students. Block et al (2016) found that using experiential methods such as journaling to encourage self-reflection helped students to develop their ability to work with different cultures. This finding is also supported by a number of other studies including Mlcek (2014), Jani et al, (2016) and Sue et al, (2010). Sue et al (2010) suggest that:

Cultural competence training needs to encompass: (a) understanding one's self as a racial/cultural being, (b) increasing cognitive understanding of how cultural conditioning affects the acquisition of biases and fears associated with race, and (c) becoming comfortable in discussing issues of race and racism in an open, honest and vulnerable manner (p. 212).

Beth says when discussing how social workers become competent in working with different cultures: “I guess that’s where that self-awareness comes in and that ability to kind of reflect on what we’re bringing”. Similarly Isla said

It’s just making sure that we don’t go in with our own prejudices, our own concepts. The door will open. If we don’t know what they’re talking about, ‘I’m sorry for my ignorance, what do you mean’. ‘Can you explain that to me please ‘cause I’m really interested in finding out so that I can learn as well. So that I don’t step on toes.’ It’s being a naïve enquirer. (Isla)

The ability to work with diversity is linked to factors other than skills. Personal qualities of openness were considered an important ingredient for students working with other cultures. This finding emulates the findings from other research regarding cross-cultural practice (Jani et al, 2016; Mlcek, 2014). Jani et al, (2016) conducted focus groups with students, academic staff and field educators in a several social work programs regarding cultural competency. One of their findings was that certain personality traits were considered important for working cross-culturally (Jani et al, 2016). Some field educators discussed personality traits of students during the interviews. Field educators enjoyed teaching students with qualities of openness, curiosity and willingness to learn (Jani et al, 2016). These personality traits related to reflective practice; one of the key skills of cross-cultural practice (Block, Rossi, Allen, Alschuler, & Wilson, 2016; Mlcek, 2014).

Personal qualities

During the interviews there were a number of conversations about whether qualities could be considered skills. For example a number of participants talked about the importance of students being open. Openness was identified by Helen as “an intrinsic quality rather than a skill.” Beth talked about openness being the basis of learning:

So I think if you’ve got that you’ve got an openness, a willingness, and these basic kind of skills, and an ability to identify risk and concerns and what have you. Then you can teach people and they can learn and they’re self-directed, and they have an interest and are motivated. (Beth)

Through the course of the conversations the aspects of character were called a number of different things including; intrinsic qualities, gifts, taonga and personal traits. These definitions all indicated that there were characteristics that field educators hoped for in students. These character traits were considered a natural resource or part of the student's nature rather than skill:

It's just interesting thinking about skills versus personality types and just the ones that seem to get a better response. (Beth)

How to get on with people ... I know in some ways that is a quality not something that can be learnt. (Alex)

The qualities most frequently mentioned by participants were; showing initiative, being accepting of others lifestyles, passion for the work, openness, honesty and willingness to learn. The participants in this study linked personal qualities of openness to other important skills. Openness was linked to student's capacity for self-awareness, critical thinking and ability to work cross-culturally. In the next section personal qualities are also linked to ethical decision-making.

Ethics

Ethical practice was defined in participants' conversation as recognising ethical dilemmas, establishing appropriate boundaries and using a method of decision-making. Problem solving was considered a useful skill when addressing ethical issues. Isla referred to the boundaries between personal and professional lives when relating to clients.

Ethics of course. Being ethically safe, definitely need that coming in. Especially with boundaries and making sure that they aren't ...having conversations with young persons outside of the service and then it gets wayward. So knowing those boundaries, knowing their basic ethics, knowing how to be able to tell the truth without harm. Not doing harm to others. So those key principles, those are really important. (Isla)

Another aspect of ethical practice was having a framework to make decisions that align with the principles of social work. The participants' argument agrees with research on the need for students to learn how to recognise and manage ethics prior to placement (Tam et al., 2013; Trevithick, 2012). The knowledge of ethical

decision-making is one that is introduced within the curriculum and then grows on placement (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015; Hay & O'Donoghue, 2007). Learning how to make ethical decisions prior to placement is related to the aforementioned critical thinking and reflective practice (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015; Mirabito, 2012). Claudia referred specifically to ethical decision-making as a skill that students needed to have:

I mean the ethics is really important, the ethics and boundaries is being able to stay safe and being able to practise in an accountable way. I think that things so quickly go wrong when people aren't really clear about where the boundaries and ethics lie (Claudia)

Having a starting understanding about managing ethical dilemmas. Because where placements haven't gone so well, is when people have come across ethical dilemmas, and (have not had) a good understanding of why it's an ethical dilemma. And learning a framework to be able to resolve it. (Claudia)

The framework for ethical practice relates to another theme which was discussed by a couple of participants, problem solving. Two participants felt that problem solving was a useful skill for students to bring to fieldwork placement. Problems solving was discussed by participants in relation to critical thinking skills and the ability to come up with ideas independently of the field educator. Other participants referred to both ethical decision-making and problem solving as important skills for social work generally rather than specifically a skill that needed to be learnt prior to placement.

Problem solving is another skill. Not just asking the questions without first trying to think about it yourself. (Alex)

Problem solving and thinking why did I say that. I suppose how to work something through. (Helen)

The area of preparing students for ethical practice is one that I think would benefit from further exploration in research. Ethical practice is not simply a matter of learning the rules and applying them to situations (Heyes & Thachuk, 2015). In order to be prepared to learn ethical practice social work students need a foundation of critical thinking, reflective practice and personal qualities of honesty (Lafrance & Gray, 2004). As discussed earlier in the chapter participants in this study also

talked about the personal qualities that they felt were important for students to have. While qualities are not necessarily considered skills they are related to the ability to acquire the important skill of ethical decision-making (Lafrance & Gray, 2004; Trevithick, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the development of skills related to the mind. Field educators outlined five key skills in this area for students to learn prior to fieldwork placement; self-awareness, critical thinking, communication, bicultural practice, and cultural skills. The research also shows that personal qualities support ability to develop skills including the skill of ethical decision-making. These skills are not considered in isolation and there are a number of links between the skills. The following chapter outlines the remainder of the findings. Chapter 6 will outline the skills related to the social service workplace as these skills are required for students to interact effectively with the mesosystem of the social work world.

Chapter 6: Findings

The World of Work

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings that relate to current practices in the workplace. The ecosystems perspective demonstrates that organisational dynamics are a factor in student social work skills (Healy, 2014). As discussed in Chapter 1, organisations can shape decisions around what social work skills are considered relevant for fieldwork placement. Field educators emphasised that skills to deal with the organisational level of the social work world were as significant as skills to deal with the micro level of practice. The participants did not discuss workplace skills in isolation and there are a number of connections with other skills particularly communication, ethical decision-making and critical thinking. The skills outlined in this chapter are workplace relationships, use of communication technology, formal writing, social work process and application of theory. This chapter concludes with participants' views on skill development.

Workplace Relationships

Field educators expect that students will demonstrate their skills of communication not only with clients, but also with agency staff on placement (Lomax & Jones, 2014). In Chapter 5, communication was discussed in relation to building rapport and creating relationships. These same skills are considered useful for relationships with agency staff in the fieldwork placement (Cleak & Wilson, 2013; Lomax & Jones, 2014). The relationships students build with staff allow for ease of work partnerships (Cleak & Wilson, 2013). Organisational dynamics are part of the ecosystem of social work skills and are an aspect that participants felt needed to be attended to by students. As Fiona says "working with clients" is "sometimes... the very easy part" "and the much harder part is how you deal with management or colleagues". Students "aren't wasting time if they are taking the time to form relationships" (Fiona). Elaine and Isla also indicated that attention needed to be paid to collegial relationships:

I think there's some basic tikanga almost in a workplace and that's things like acknowledging and getting to know all the staff, and having an interest in their work as well. (Elaine)

One of the other things is to be able to connect with staff to say 'oh this happened in this situation', ... being able to actually walk through and communicate (Isla)

Communication skills were discussed in relation to colleagues both inside and outside the fieldwork placement. "Building relationships intentionally, holding multiple relationships and multiple lenses, across a range of views" was seen as necessary within social work as the relationships with clients (Helen). Students benefit from understanding that managers are an integral part of a successful placement (Hay & Brown, 2015). Students in previous studies have indicated that they would like to be taught the skills of managing workplace relationships prior to embarking on placement (Barlow & Hall, 2007). The relationship students had to the hierarchy of an organisation was mentioned by both Elaine and Fiona:

Being respectful to any sort of hierarchy or boss or so on. I mean let's face it that's often quite important and if we're relying on our boss to allow us to have students, it's to acknowledge them and make an effort to get alongside them is important too. (Elaine)

There will be some kind of power structure that they will have to follow to some degree, and I hate it, it's going to drive them crazy for a bit. But then they'll find a way to manage it. (Fiona)

A useful way to prepare students for workplace dynamics prior to placement is with group projects (Maidment & Brook, 2014). Students can be taught "conflict resolution, teamwork, time and workload management and work readiness, while learning the valuable lesson that project work and social work is complex and sometimes messy" (Maidment & Brook, 2014, p. 80). Fiona echoed these findings and suggested that group projects within the classroom could be used to teach ways of working in teams.

There was awful group work projects, but you learnt a lot about human dynamics. ... you've got to deal with it and the outcome won't always be fair...you've had to work with people that had very different learning styles and very different time management skills. (Fiona)

Fiona indicated that for group learning to be valuable for students, social work educators needed to be explicit about connections of group work to teamwork. In Fiona's training the group work projects took place without explanation of how it might connect to placement. She says: "there's a whole bit there like you learnt but it wasn't explicit, and what could be good you know is to have that as an explicit part of the learning." (Fiona). This finding is in agreement with techniques Maidment & Brook (2014) used in teaching group work project skills to students. Social work educators in the study deliberately prepared students to connect group work learning with skills to work in teams (Maidment & Brook, 2014).

Developing workplace relationships was the most predominant finding in discussion of the workplace but participants mentioned other workplace skills. It is recommended to students that they be organised for the placement workplace by turning up on time, dividing personal time from professional time and dress appropriately (Mathews et al., 2014). Jenny was one of the participants who referred to this (FGC is an acronym for Family Group Conference):

The importance of turning up on time. Being dressed appropriately and all that kind of thing. 'Cause it is a professional environment but then if you're going to run around in a field with children versus going and sitting in FGC. I mean they're quite different, and our reputation is that you'd dress according to what you're doing. (Jenny)

Communication technology

The ability to use communication technology appropriately is a key skill identified by participants in this study. Communication technology includes email, telephone, cellphone and social media. The introduction of the internet into the world of social work has led to increasing use of email communication along with other internet resources (Beaumont, Chester, & Rideout, 2017; Beddoe, 2016; Thompson, 2015a). Knowledge about the appropriate use of communication technology is a must for social workers including social media and cellphones (Voshel & Wesala, 2015). Participants within this study echo the statements of other researchers on the imperative for students to develop etiquette around the use of communication technology (Beddoe, 2016; Trevithick, 2012). Cellphones have become a commonplace communication device for social work students both

in their professional and personal lives (Cooner, Knowles, & Stout, 2016). Social work field educators hoped that students would have some ability to judge when the right time was to use particular mediums of communication, however, Fiona indicated that students did not always have this skill.

The practical ... How do I manage email communications? When is the right time to do letter, email, phone call, in person visits. That's not always clear to people, a lot of people particularly social media age, they feel I'll just send them a text. Actually that's not okay for a first contact. In many cases. (Fiona)

There's a whole lot of stuff that is formal, and you're not going to be chatty with the person, like 'hi just letting you know I've called Child Youth and Family lol' (laughs), ... or 'called Child Youth and Family angry face'. (Fiona)

As Beddoe (2016) points out most social workers are not trained how to use telephones in a social worker setting even though it is common social work tool. The skill and use of basic communication technology such as phones and email is something that the field educators in this study felt was important.

That always needs a wee bit of work just around understanding what information to share over the phone. What to leave on a voice message, what to kind of wait. And if you set up an appointment, what information you could share over the phone, what should you hold back until you meet with somebody. (Claudia)

Beddoe (2016) suggests that these skills can be rehearsed in the classroom through role-play prior to placement. Using role-plays in the classroom works to emphasise the fact that using any communication medium (telephone, cell-phone or email), within social work, requires maintenance of communication skills and ethical practice (Beddoe, 2016). Trevithick (2012) has developed specific guidelines for the use of letters, phones, cell-phones and emails to support the development of this skill. The ANZASW standards include a statement that indicates that an important skill in social work is the ability to “evidence safe and ethical and competent use of digital and internet technology, in both personal and professional circumstances” (Aotearoa New Zealand Association for Social Workers, 2014, p. 8). This corroborates the opinion of Fiona and Elaine that social

workers need to learn how to manage the way they communicated on technology. This applied to both personal communication and communication in social work practice.

I'll get emails in from social work students in saying 'hi, my name is so and so, I've got this time to meet you, can you let me know?', I'm like 'no'. Sometimes I don't even reply to them. Because it's clearly almost like a generic email that's been sent out, there's no actual interest. It's not being done as a sort of 'hi this is so and so, I'd just love to chat with you, what time is ...' that I might respond to. But the way some of it's done and can almost be worded as a command. (Fiona)

If a student can't use a telephone properly to access resources or create an opportunity that they need for their client, I wouldn't see my role as a field work educator to sit and talk to somebody through how to make a phone call. I would think those things should come with the student and then it should be fine tuning the information they need. (Elaine)

Field educators indicated that the personal use of cellphones in the workplace was an issue for students sometimes. Helen said this was not just an issue restricted to student social workers.

Use of technology in the workplace like a couple of times we've had students who have been on their phones a lot. And I suppose around professional behaviour. That's tricky because they also see all the other workers on their phones. (Helen)

Elaine suggested this was not necessarily due to the young age of the students.

I know I've got colleagues that think that maturity is kind of an age based thing, but we've definitely seen mature students that don't have good boundaries, and will be using their phones a lot. (Elaine)

As these findings show, participants wanted students to know etiquette around using communication technology particularly phone, email and text. Almost all participants indicated that many students come from a generation who are more familiar with the technical aspects of technology than they were themselves.

Technology in terms of their skills, I feel that this generation of social workers are pretty technologically awesome, I wouldn't

have anything to add there, other than management of their presence and their interactions on that with their clients. (Beth)

Our last student that came, came just as we got a new database system and they were a whiz on it, and showing the worker how to use it (Jenny)

There is a generation gap between experienced social workers and student social workers around the use of social media (Voshel & Wesala, 2015). Students use social media regularly and may not talk to field educators about their use. This could be due to a sense that experienced social workers won't be able to help them with social media ethics or due to a lack of awareness that the use of social media could be an issue (Voshel & Wesala, 2015). A key issue for the use of social media is the boundary of when it should be used and how it should be used. The fact that communication technology crosses personal and professional spaces means that boundaries around the use of it need to be continually explored (Boddy & Dominelli, 2017). Research shows that a number of students cross boundaries in the use of social media due to ignorance around the ethical issues that are involved with this (Goldingay & Boddy, 2017; Mukherjee & Clark, 2012). Students will consider befriending clients on social media without thinking through the implications for the client or themselves (Mukherjee & Clark, 2012; Voshel & Wesala, 2015). Beth discusses this by saying:

How do we deal with this? Because I think it brings up for students 'will I hurt their feelings?', there's a sense of rejection. '(If) someone else didn't 'like' me' then I would' – you know? It's another whole arena that needs to be really addressed. And have a real sense of how to handle that. (Beth)

How do this generation of social workers manage their social media presence, and their engagement with clients on social media? ...For one of the students that came up, where the client text to say 'oh I can't find you on Facebook'. Issues I never had to deal with. (Beth)

Goldingay and Boddy (2016) concur with these participants regarding the number of ethical issues that can arise in use of communication technology, particularly crossing the boundaries between professional and personal. The ability to think through the ethics of cellphone and social media use is one that is lacking in some social work students (Goldingay & Boddy 2016). The participants in this study

had more questions than answers in this area and they are not alone in this (Boddy & Dominelli, 2017). If social workers and students have not guidelines in this area, it can be difficult to make decisions around the best use of communication technology (Boddy & Dominelli, 2017). A couple of participants indicated that the use of technology has advanced ahead further than guidelines in the workplace for its use. Other participants had this built into the induction of students in their workplace policies. Helen noticed that the use of technology to contact clients easily created potential issues with students blurring the boundary between personal and professional time. When talking about clients Helen said:

Their main form of technology is Facebook messenger. That's going to be the easiest way to get a hold of them. (Helen)

and regarding students:

How do we manage at night time when people go home? Do they turn their phones off? Are they taking calls? (Helen)

The SWRB code of conduct is a useful resource in this area as is the aforementioned ANZASW practice standards to reinforce the notion of ethical practice with social work students. In relation to preparation for placement the SWRB code of conduct, ANZASW ethics and research guidelines can be used to inform education prior to placement. Inclusion of interactive activities using online resources in the classroom help students begin to formulate understanding around ethical practice online (Goldingay & Boddy, 2017). This needs to be accompanied by some guidance around cellphone and social media etiquette in social work practice (Goldingay & Boddy, 2017). Boddy & Dominelli (2017), Kimball and Kim (2013), and Voshell and Wesala (2015) have put together clear guidelines for students to consider when using communication technology. These include the critical analysis of what, why and where information is shared using communication technology (Kimball & Kim, 2013). There is a tendency for students to ignore education within the academy if it contradicts practice social workers opinion. Guidance around communication technology therefore needs to happen with collaboration of the wider social work community (Smeby & Heggen, 2014; Wilson & Kelly, 2010).

Formal Writing

As discussed in Chapter 2 written communication is an important skill for social work (Mirabito, 2012; Trevithick, 2012). Egan (2016) states, “Professional written communication skills are as important as verbal communication skills” (p. 112). Formal writing in the form of case notes and reports is a skill that social work educators in New Zealand include amongst the skills they teach (Ballantyne et al., 2016b). Participants in this study discussed the importance of being able to communicate through the written word including emails, reports, notes and assessments. Writing skills were seen as a useful skill to bring into placement and Isla indicated that the students she experienced came with “great...writing skills”. Helen felt there was a lack in her own training particularly around the skill of client case recording and felt that this should be taught prior to going on placement.

Formal writing was connected in participants’ minds to a more holistic framework of communication and relationship building. Styles of formal writing were seen to differ depending on the work place. Participants felt that students could practice writing formally in the academic setting but would learn the specific style of a workplace through experience. This view is supported by other researchers who verify a diversity of approaches in writing client notes dictated by the work of the agency (Egan, 2016). Beth said, “Every workplace has different types of writing, different styles”. She then goes on to say:

Probably something that needs to be thought about in terms of when you go out into your placement or the workforce these become legal documents and sort of have legal implications of what they’re writing, and maybe some general ideas around it being non-judgemental and to the point, and clinical information only, and you deal with third person information. ...students coming out into placement with an open mind and a yeah – a sort of a knowing that this is some part of what they have to do. (Beth)

Egan (2016) suggests ways in which this skill can be practiced in the classroom using role-play scenarios. Written communication is another example of a skill that can be learnt at a basic level in the classroom and then needs further development once students are on placement and in practice (Mathews et al,

2014). Beth indicated that formal writing could be taught prior to placement but also should be taught and assessed within the placement itself.

Social work process

The findings from these participants indicate that assessment skill is more than being able to write well. Assessment is about combining a number of skills together in order to obtain information, piece it together and begin finding ways around particular barriers (Trevithick, 2012). Participants in this study mentioned the importance of assessment skills and the need for this to be taught in training prior to placement. Participants suggested that learning how to do a thorough assessment benefits students when they come into contact with clients during placement. Assessment skills were further defined as “identification of problem areas” (Elaine) and “asking the right questions” (Alex). Alex acknowledged that he would not expect students to be able to do an entire assessment with a client on their first week in placement but would have the beginnings of knowing the information they needed for an assessment.

Definitely need to have some assessment skills. Especially where they are meeting people for the first time. It's the sort of place people are coming to us with the first presentation of something. I think they need to have some assessment skill ability and that involves asking the right questions and also being able to figure things out from the answers that they get. I know it's a big expectation on the first placement for a student to be able to do sit down and do a proper interview with a person, getting everything you need but, being able to plan what we are going to ask. (Alex)

Like other social work skills participants felt that students improved their assessment skills through practice in placement and training.

Some of those skills come with their learning theory and models and having a good understanding of why people do the things that they do, but I think some of it's about practise. Hearing information and learning. (Claudia)

Assessment was seen by participants as one part of a broader social work process. In Chapter 1 it was mentioned that current SWRB recognitions standards places the word 'risk' in front of assessment when discussing skills necessary prior to

placement (Social Workers Registration Board, 2016b). Assessment involves assessing risk, however, continually emphasising risk over other areas of assessment means that it becomes seen as a priority over assessing other aspects of a situation (Maidment, 2003; Morley, 2016). The participants in this research discuss assessment in context. Assessment is not the only aspect of social work. It fits within broader social work approaches and needs to match the interventions that take place following the assessment (Sewpaul & Jones, 2004). Alex and Fiona spoke about assessment needing to be followed up with a congruent intervention.

Assessment, Intervention and Evaluation. There has to be some congruence between information gathered at the start and the work that is done with that person. I think that can be learnt in the classroom. (Alex)

The position of assessment in social work practice these days I feel gets too much attention. You have to know assessment to know how to go forward with somebody...even in practice we can have these meetings and you've got four different people doing the assessments. But the family's sat there for six months with nothing actually happening for them,... it's a lovely academic exercise and everybody can see their wonderful work but they still produce nothing for the family. So my part with assessment is assessment to intervention, and timeliness.... I guess part of an ongoing process. (Fiona)

Assessment is one of the places where theory is applied to practice in order to guide interventions and ways of thinking (Fook, 2016).

Application of Theory

The participants wanted the students that they supported on placement to have theoretical knowledge and to have the skill of applying theory to fieldwork placement experience. This was seen as important in terms of evidencing social work decisions to other professionals but also as a way of knowing what underpinned the work in order to be able to look at situations from a number of different perspectives. To have an "ability to be able to at least try and discuss where they're coming from in terms of their work. What's guiding your practice?" (Beth)

Some participants said that students lacked theory knowledge and application when beginning fieldwork placement. The inability of students to connect their academic learning to placement experiences is an issue that has been raised in other studies (Walton, 2005). Overall, in the conversations, participants felt that specific theories should be addressed in training and they noticed a lack of this knowledge in students. The theories and models the participants described as lacking in students were attachment, transference, counter transference and motivational interviewing. Other theories that were named as important in training were solution focused and people centred. Students are most likely to learn how to connect theory to practice within the context of placement (Fook et al, 2000), however, the participants wanted students to begin learning this skill prior to placement.

When I was first working, I didn't have any of that to draw on. I was just sort of a ship in the ocean, like responding to my own assumptions and judgements. But once you have your training, then you've got something a little more solid to draw on. So that can't be learnt in the field, that has to be taught in the classroom. Those theoretical perspectives, and then those interventions sort of you know methods. So they all need to be taught. (Beth)

I think some of those skills come with their learning theory and models and having a good understanding of why people do the things that they do, but I think some of it's about practise (Claudia)

Fook et al (2000) express the opinion that students should be encouraged by social work educators to make connections between different theories. In this way, rather than viewing each theory as mutually exclusive students can be encouraged to build a model of practice that includes a number of different theories (Fook et al, 2000). Participants thought using scenarios and role-plays in the classroom was a useful way of teaching this skill. This is corroborated by social work academics (Costello, 2016; Gockel & Burton, 2014)

Taking this scenario and applying it to these series of theories, these series of theories, you know compare and contrast, see where they all are at. In actual fact that repetition for me, I found that really useful because it meant I became quite flexible in my mind about seeing okay well it could be from this view or from

that view, what is the framework that I will understand that from.
(Fiona)

The skill of assessment is connected to a number of skills already mentioned. Self-awareness, critical thinking and communication are all tools in which the skill of applying theory can be built on (Trevithick, 2012)

Development of skill

All participants discussed at some point in the conversation their belief that developing skills takes time and practice. The concept that time is an important factor in developing skills is something that the participants and researchers agree on. Underlying the stage models discussed in Chapter 3 is the idea that time is needed to develop skill (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980; Fook et al, 2000). Ruch's (2002) model also includes time as an important factor in developing skill. Claudia and Helen say:

Knowledge itself comes with time and experience. (Claudia)

A student comes with their life, their work and their knowledge, ... and their experience, and to varying degrees some integration of that, but that actually takes a lot of time. I know from my own experience ... it took me quite a long time once I even started the work. So some of it can't be taught (Helen)

Helen's comment also illuminates the fact that students do not come to training a blank slate and their life experiences need to be factored into their training. Social work educators should be aware that life experience contributes to student skill development (Fook et al, 2000). While this current study concentrated on looking at the development of skill prior to placement, participant comments highlight the fact that skill development starts prior to training and continues into placement and beyond. Participants said that most skills could be taught in the classroom and then further developed through placement and practice.

Once you have your training, then you've got something a little more solid to draw on. So that can't be learnt in the field. That has to be taught in the classroom. Those theoretical perspectives, and then those interventions sort of you know methods. So they all need to be taught. (Beth)

Skills can be developed through learning approaches in the classroom and then applying them in different ways in practice (Adams, 2007;Costello, 2016). The importance of the congruence between classroom teaching and placement teaching is emphasised in Smeby and Heggen's (2014) research. Smedy and Heggan (2014) found that professional training requires social work educators inside and outside the classroom to be working together to support students to acquire skill. Beth used the analogy of building a foundation in classroom in order that field educators weren't expected to build the house of skills from the ground up: "you're providing them with a foundation of like critical social work tools that then they build all the clinical knowledge on to" (Beth). Elaine similarly described placement skills being built on a baseline of skills learnt in training:

The placement should be that the students coming in with enough skills to be able to start to do the work and the real learning is that workplace setting, first and foremost. ... coming in with a set of really basic skills that need developed, instead of having the responsibility to build the skills from the ground up. (Elaine)

Participants were cognisant, however, that not everything could be taught prior to placement. Skills could be started in the classroom and then expanded once in placement. This relates to Dall'Alba and Sandberg (2006) demonstrate that professional skill is developed mostly through students using their skill within workplace contexts. While there are ways to bring the real world into the classroom (Costello, 2016) there is no substitute for social work experience (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006; Grant et al., 2014; Tham & Lynch, 2014). The participants acknowledged limitations to what could be taught in four years of training.

In terms of building a foundation there's only so much you can do in a four year. And without application, because then there's bits that you couldn't really work on until you've done some practise, and then you can add to your skill base. (Fiona)

I think that a lot of the skills came for me in placement, more than training. Like I think that you know, the training gave me the foundation, like the understanding of what I was doing and the understanding of people and different groups. But I think most of the skills came out of placement more than anything else. (Claudia)

As discussed in Chapter 2 metaphor, models and images can be used as a way to conceptualise the process of skill development. Adams (2007) used the image of a spiral staircase and Ruch (2002) used the image of a messy spiral and Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006) describes skill development as a circular process. Beth, Fiona and Claudia used construction terms to describe the skills taught prior to placement such as the word foundation. Fiona and Beth had two different metaphors to describe skill development. Fiona uses the journey as metaphor and Beth used the metaphor of a baby bird. Fiona said “we never come and do anything perfectly formed, so we are still on our own journey.” and “you can’t know all of that stuff right off, but you can know there is something you need to know”. Beth suggested that confidence could not be learned from the classroom and could “only really” be learnt in placement. The metaphor used for this was a fledgling bird “coming out of the nest” of the classroom and into the wide-open spaces of placement (Beth). All of these metaphors emphasise that students have to start somewhere and progress in their own way along the path of acquiring skill through time and experience. A symbol that came to my mind while researching this subject was that of the koru, symbolising growth.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the workplace skills field educators perceive are important for students to learn prior to placement. These skills are related to those from the previous chapter on the use of the mind. Some aspects of skill such as workplace relationships remain unchanged from previous years. Other skills such as communication technology and formal writing have become more prominent with changes in the workplace. The following chapter offers a conclusion to this piece of research and discusses the implications for practice and further research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to address a gap in research around preparing students for placement. Chapter 1 explained the context of skills education by describing organisation and government influences on social work student skills. In the subsequent chapters research around skills development was explored starting with the larger body of studies around social work skills generally and moving on towards more specific research around skills preparation for placement. Two areas of skills education that have been studied in considerable depth are reflective practice and critical thinking. Models created by academics in these areas provide a starting point to consider how skills are developed in social work training and practice. These models informed the interview questions in the semi-structured interviews. Constructivism guided the methodology of this research including the way in which the data was analysed. Participant interviews were analysed for common themes. The findings from this analysis were divided into two chapters and are presented in Table 2.

Rather than classifying the skills into a model I have kept the findings open. The emphasis of the findings has been on skills of the mind and skills pertaining to the current workplace. Many of the findings from this research around the skills needed prior to placement are in keeping with other researchers opinion. The findings suggest that there are skills that social work programmes need to address for the benefit of students, field educators and ultimately social work clients. These are bicultural, practice, cross-cultural work and the use of communication technology. This research provides a useful addition to knowledge around preparing students for placement. The findings can be used to improve practice in the area of social work education and create further opportunities for research.

What skills are needed prior to placement?

When I set out to seek field educator's opinions on this topic I underestimated at least two things. The field educator's expertise on the topic and the breadth of the topic I was tackling. The field educators in this study had a well thought out

opinion around what skills students should have prior to coming on placement. Field educators in this study indicated that the following skills were useful for students to have prior to placement:

Table 2 Social work skills needed prior to fieldwork placement

Reflective practice	Ability to form workplace relationships
Critical thinking	Appropriate use of communication technology
Bicultural practice	Formal writing
Cross-cultural practice	Social work process
Ethical decision making	Application of theory

As discussed in the findings chapter, the idea that these skills would be useful if included in the social work curriculum is not new. This research is important because it shows that social work educators both inside and outside the academy are in agreement around what students need to learn prior to placement. This finding is contrary to studies that lament the lack of congruence between social work educators within educational institutions and social work educators within agencies (Domakin, 2014; Higgins et al, 2016). The rhetoric that social work academics are out of touch with practice might be overstated as all of the ten skills are in the curriculum of social work programmes (Ballantyne et al., 2016b). Some of the skills mentioned in these findings have been around for a long time and continue to be important in social work education. Critical thinking, communication and reflective practice are not new skills to the profession and have already been discussed in academic literature and been taught in social work education (Bogo et al, 2011; Leveridge, 2003; O'Connor et al, 2009; Wilson, 2013).

Limitations

As was discussed in the methodology this research had a number of limitations. These provide the opportunity for further research to continue to inform social work skills education. A number of voices were missing in this research, specifically clients and students. While previous research has been done with social work students there is a general lack of research using the client voice. This thesis would have been strengthened by a greater diversity of cultural background and by the participation of social work field educators currently working at Oranga Tamariki. Despite the limitations, this research had some useful findings that could contribute to improvements to social work education and further research.

What did I learn?

The findings from this research provide ten core skills that students would benefit from beginning to learn prior to placement. Field educators were realistic about the limits to classroom teaching but had some useful suggestions around how different skills could be taught in the classroom. I need to acknowledge here that colleagues in other institutions may have programs that already prepare students in all the skills areas mentioned in this study. Nonetheless, I'm sure there are other social work educators who would benefit from this research. Most of the skills mentioned in the findings are already being taught to students prior to entering placement and have had a large amount of studies published in these areas. This includes the areas of critical thinking, reflective practice, formal writing, social work process, application of theory and communication. There are a number of areas in which the findings contribute to both practice and a foundation for further research. These include bicultural practice, cultural practice, use of communication technology and relationships with colleagues. An area for further research is around skill development in younger social work students as this is a current issue within social work education. This research also serves to emphasise the importance of collaboration in social work education. I will proceed to discuss each of these findings separately and outline the implications for practice and the possibilities for further research.

Bicultural practice

As discussed throughout the thesis, bicultural practice is a complex issue and one that would benefit from further conversation and research. I qualify any recommendations I make here with the knowledge that I am Pākehā and therefore only able to make limited commentary on this issue. The findings on the relationship field educators have to bicultural skills create an opportunity for discussion and debate. Both Māori and Pākehā participants in this research talked about bicultural training in social work education as a process that they would like to be different. Pākehā field educators hoped for the ability to have open conversations and to explore bicultural issues more freely. Māori social workers advocate for Pākehā to give more power to Māori researchers, teachers and social workers to create ways of working that fit Te Ao Māori.

As a Pākehā social work academic I feel that it is not my place to say how things should happen at the higher levels of interaction, as I am not privy to those conversations. At the level I am working at, however, I intend to use this research to generate conversations within the social work programme that I am operating in, within the sub committee of CWEANZ and within the Dunedin community of social services. A workshop co-designed and run by Māori and Pākehā social workers in Dunedin might be a place to start. However, I also make room for the possibility that there is too much distrust on the part of Māori social workers to want to be part of such a workshop and the preference for social workers who identify as Māori is to put their energies into working with other Māori to develop their own models, research and practices.

We have not yet journeyed to a place where Māori have power over the systems, educational institutions and services that affect them. Until that happens my guess is that we will continue to find ourselves stuck in the same conversations. In regards to research opportunities, this area is worthy of further development and has already benefited from collaborative research models such as the Kaitiakitanga framework. This thesis could be built on by using best practice in the Te Ara Riki framework.

Cross-cultural skill

The findings of this research suggest that field educators feel that being equipped to work cross-culturally is important for social work students. This finding, whilst different is related to bicultural practice. Eketone (2015) suggests that focusing on bicultural practice does not lessen the importance of cross-cultural practice. In the minds of some of the field educators I talked to they were intertwined issues and some said that cross-cultural ways of working were being neglected in the concentration on bicultural practice. It is my recommendation that social work educators support students with some beginning level of skill in cross-cultural practice. This could be done in numerous ways through class room experiences, guest speakers, and role-plays. I do not feel that research around cross-cultural skill is lacking, however the application into education and practice is an area that could be improved on. Locally the barriers to this are around time, energy and motivation. Those from other cultures are asked continually for their support around cross-cultural work with little reciprocity. Teaching students some basic guidelines prior to embarking on practice could address this perceived gap in student education.

The latest technology

The findings from this research around the use of communication technology are a useful contribution to skills research. There are two areas the findings can be used to improve social work education. The first is that social work academics within institutions need to ensure that they support students to understand that private communication technology such as Facebook and texting need to be used ethically. This can be done through experiential online activities and through discussing the guidelines which have come from research. Explicit guidelines that exist in research are more useful than the more open terminology of ANZASW and SWRB guidelines. The second issue is that some field educators are either oblivious or uncertain in this area and would benefit from further training around ethics and communication technology. Field educators are the role models for social work students and therefore have a lot of influence on how social work students deal with the ethics of communication technology in the work place. Since newer forms of communication technology were not around during the time

most field educators were training this would be a valuable training opportunity that educational institutions could offer to field educators. Again the research that has already been carried out in this area needs to be applied to practice. There is room for further research in this area in the New Zealand context, as this would strengthen guidelines in professional body organisations. Research around how social workers currently practice in this area would support the development of an ethical framework.

Relationships with colleagues

Preparing students to engage in workplace relationships would benefit from further research. The findings suggest that field educators expect students to develop relationships with staff and managers within social service agencies. As discussed in the second chapter students are more commonly coming into training straight from school and therefore are less likely to have the life experience that mature students bring to social work education. Combining this knowledge from previous studies with the finding around skill development brings up interesting questions. Questions that would benefit from further research. Is it realistic to expect young social work students to immediately know how to form relationships with others in the workplace? Have social work students' main adult relationships been with their parents and teachers? Does the fact that students have no employment status within the organisation affect their confidence in relating to service staff and managers? The skill to relate to others in the workplace including those of different generations is one that I'm unsure can be taught prior to placement. Skills in workplace relationships is an area that is worthy of further exploration given that it is such an important skill in successful social work placements.

Generation gap – implications

The discussion with social work field educators of their own social work journeys brings up an issue regarding skill development that would benefit from further research. The field educators' own development of skill came about through life experience, academic classroom learning, placement and training. As mentioned already the students that are currently entering social work education have a

different path to the profession. They are frequently coming into social work having been enrolled in education institutions for most of their life and have less opportunity to be exposed to a range of life experiences due to their age (Walton, 2015). While this finding sat outside the frame of this research it is an area that would benefit from further research. Viewing social work education within the frame of wider changes in society is valuable and necessary.

As discussed in Chapter 1 social work education at University of Otago has been changed over the years by government policies and organisational response in an ecosystem that values finances over human social need. Social work programmes are required under law to be more risk adverse about taking students with a criminal record at the same time as tertiary sector is accepting social work students without experience into professional programmes. Students cannot be expected to have skills that they have not had a chance to develop.

Field educators in this study were clear with the skills they felt could be developed in the classroom but they also acknowledged the limits to this. Skills could be started in the classroom and then needed further learning once in placement. Placement provides the contextual learning that is so necessary for the development of social work skill. Some educational settings have attempted to ensure students come to social work training with some life experience by building observational experience into courses prior to placement. However this is not always possible in the educational institutions that social work training takes place in. This is a dilemma and a current issue within social work education that would benefit from further research.

Collaborative education

The context around social work education involves a number of stakeholders as outlined in the introduction. Social work skills education does not occur in a vacuum and takes place in a complex environment. As is true in social work practice collective action is more effective than individuals working on their own. There are opportunities within forums such as CSWEANZ and ANZASW to address the issues around social work education together. Many hands make light work.

I am not recommending anything new when I suggest that skills education must take place collaboratively between students, educational institutions and social service agencies. The triad of assessment discussed in the introduction support this method of joint practice. SWRB also supports this way of practicing with their emphasis on including the opinions of students, social service agencies and clients in programme planning. The onus of this interaction has to come from educational institutions and barriers of time and resources need to be overcome in order to address this issue. As an example, this year (2017) a hospital social worker volunteered to run a workshop for social work students and social workers around mental health and alcohol and drugs. The idea for this workshop came from joint conversations between the social worker and the fieldwork team around the need for social work students to be better prepared to work in these fields of practice. Neither the hospital nor the University were given funding in order to run these workshops, however with the energy of the hospital social worker, combined with the goodwill of the community and the support of the fieldwork team these workshops took place. I feel this is a valuable example of taking the resources that we have at hand to address issues that occur for our social work community.

Ultimately, however, for the government to fund social work training at an appropriate level in order that this training could be consistent would be the answer to a lot of the issues discussed in this chapter. If social work education were funded at the right level social work programmes would be empowered to ensure that all students had some volunteer experience prior to entering the program. An appropriate level of funding would also mean that community members could be contracted in to fill gaps that exist in program content.

Conclusion

This thesis intended to answer the question what skills do social work students need prior to placement? At the end of the research process this thesis has identified ten key skills that social workers in the field would like students to be aware of prior to placement. Along the way I have attempted to show how this question while on the face of it may seem simple is made more complex by the

environment that surrounds social work education. Thankfully we have a starting place; a number of researchers have outlined the foundation of skills of critical thinking and reflective practice in such detail as to make them a natural part of education and social work practice. In regards to these skills social workers both within educational institutions and in the social work field have a common language. Where there is less agreement however are in the skills of bicultural practice, cross-cultural work and communication technology. These are all areas that would benefit from further conversation, education and practice attention. This thesis has added to the conversation and can be a continuation of improvement in skills education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Appendix A: Information Sheet

[Reference Number: 16/135]

23rd September 16



Skills Social Work Students Need Prior to Going on Placement.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR

PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

This project seeks to explore the views of social workers around skill acquisition by Otago University social work students. This project is specifically interested in your views on the kind of skills you believe students should acquire prior to beginning placement. It is envisaged that your views on this subject will better inform Field Co-ordinators, Field Educators and students about the kind of skills that students need pre-placement in order to make the best use of their placement experience. This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for Liz McCafferty's Master of Arts in Human Services.

What Type of Participants are being sought?

The project seeks to invite social workers who provided field education for students of University of Otago in 2015 and/or 2016. In order to avoid a conflict of interest you have been selected out of the group of field educators who are not currently working with a student whom Liz McCafferty is the Field Co-ordinator. You have been selected from the list of field educators held by the University of Otago who meet this criteria. The project is seeking to recruit between 7 and 10 field educators who are social work qualified across the NGO, Statutory and Hospital sector. Participants will be notified and receive a copy of the project's published results should they wish.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project you will be first asked to fill out a consent form. You can choose to participate in the interview either face to face, via Skype or by phone. You then will be asked to participate in a one hour interview with Liz McCafferty at a time convenient to you. If the interview is face to face the interview will take place at a location of your choosing. Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?

The interview will be digitally recorded and information you provide will solely be used by the researcher to develop an understanding of the development of social work student skills prior to placement. You are free to use another name during your involvement in the project. The results of the project will be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand). Every attempt will be made to ensure you remain anonymous.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. Data obtained as a result of the research will be retained for **at least 5 years** in secure storage. Any personal information held on the participants [such as contact details, digital recordings, after they have been transcribed etc.,] may be destroyed at the completion of the research even

though the data derived from the research will, in most cases, be kept for much longer or possibly indefinitely.

The interview will involve an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes: your experiences as a field educator and the skills you believe are necessary for students to obtain prior to beginning placement. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the discussion develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the focus group discussions, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Liz McCafferty

or

Patrick Vakoati

Sociology, Gender and Social Work

Sociology, Gender and Social Work

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This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator

(ph +643 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix B: Interview questions

Guide Questions and Statements for Semi-structured Interviews

Thanks for taking the time to talk to me about this research project. I'm going to ask you some questions however feel free to add any information that you think is important. While I'm going to ask some personal details around the sector you work in and your ethnicity you are under no obligation to give this to me and this will not be published. After this interview is finished I will transcribe our conversation and send you this in a word document in order that you can review what we have discussed and make changes if you want to.

To start things off can you tell me a little bit about you social work practice background and your initial training?

What kind of qualification did you do?

Do you remember what kind of skills you learnt within your training?

What were these?

Were these skills taught to you within your academic work? Within your placement? Or prior to coming to your Social Work Qualification.

What areas have you worked with during your social work career?

What kind of skills do you think are important for you to have in your social work generally?

In the area that you work in specifically?

How long have you provided fieldwork education for?

How many students have you worked with?

What are the most important skills students need?

Why are these important?

Do you think that these skills can be taught prior to placement?

What skills can be taught in the classroom and what can be only taught on placement?

Previous research has shown that some social workers feel that these areas of skills are important (name any that haven't been used in the interview from the following categories: assessment, communication, formal writing, technology, self reflection, self knowledge, bi-cultural, working with difference)

What do you think about this?

Is there anything you would like to add to what we have talked about? Anything else you think is important skills to have prior to placement?

To finish off do you mind if I ask what ethnicity you identify as?

Thanks very much.

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